PRINCIPLES OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE

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Principles of the Religious Life

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AN EXPLANATION OF THE
"CATECHISM OF THE VOWS"

By FATHER PETER COTEL, S. J.

Carefully Revised and Adapted to the Code of Canon Law
By FATHER EMILE JOMBART, S. J.

Translated from the Fourth French Edition
By FATHER T. LINCOLN BOUSCAREN, S. J.

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PRINTERS TO THE HOLY APOSTOLIC SEE

977

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Præp. Prov. Missourianæ.

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ARTHUR J. SCANLAN, S. T. D.
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Imprimatur.

PATRICK CARDINAL HAYES
Archbishop of New York

NEW YORK, OCTOBER 2, 1926

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PREFACE TO THE FOURTH FRENCH EDITION, 1922[1]

AFTER having written the *Catechism of the Vows*, Father Cotel wrote an explanation of it, a sort of guide or "teacher's book," designed especially for superiors, masters of novices, confessors, preachers, and chaplains of religious communities.

From many quarters I received urgent requests to re-edit this excellent book.

The promulgation of the Code of Canon Law has rendered necessary a radical revision of the canonical parts of the work. On the other hand, I have left almost unaltered the ascetical explanations, in which the author almost always follows very closely the *Summa Theologica* of Saint Thomas. Wherever any detail seemed to me to require modification or supplement, I have supplied them almost always by way of notes, without making any material change in the text. While I have tried to preserve the charming simplicity of Father Cotel's style, I have also sought (excessively, some may say; others, not enough) to relieve its archaism and heaviness. Imperfections which may exist in the form will be no bar to the drawing of great profit from so solid and judicious a work.

(EMILE JOMBART, S. J.)

ENGHIEN, BELGIUM, March 19, 1922.
Feast of Saint Joseph

[1] Slightly abridged.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

IT WAS deemed desirable to have an English translation of the Explanation to accompany Father William McCabe's excellent English version of the *Catechism* itself; and the present translation was accordingly undertaken at the request of superiors.

The translator dedicates his small part in this work to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and asks a remembrance in the prayers of all those who may use this book, that he, together with them and those under their care, may come to a more perfect practise of the sublime principles of the religious life.

T. LINCOLN BOUSCAREN, S. J.

ST. LOUIS UNIVERSITY

CONTENTS

PAGE

PREFACE TO THE FOURTH FRENCH EDITION, 1922 . . . 5

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE 7

PART I

THE VOWS OF RELIGION IN GENERAL

CHAPTER ONE—The general concept of a vow, considered in the vows of religion 15

Art. I.—Definition of a vow 15

Sect. 1.—A vow is a promise.—Various kinds of promises which may be made to men, to God 16

Sect. 2.—A vow is a *deliberate* promise.—Knowledge, consent, freedom.—First probation, or postulantship.—Second probation, or novice-ship 17

Sect. 3.—A vow is a promise *made by man to God.*—The reciprocal promise of God to man.—Obligations and advantages resulting from it 22

Sect. 4.—A vow is a promise *of a better act.*—Acts which may be the subject of a vow 29

Art. II.—A Vow is an Act of the Virtue of Religion . 30

Sect. 1.—A vow partakes of the nature of a sacrifice.—It causes one to share in a special manner in the sacrifice of Christ 30

Sect. 2.—The virtue of religion, which is the virtue peculiar to religious.—Its definition.—Significance of the word *religion.*—What we owe to God.—Details of the religious life.—Essence of the religious spirit.—Genuine practise of the virtue of religion.—Religion, a moral, not a theological virtue.—God is honored by faith, hope, and charity.—The name *religious* 31

PAGE

Sect. 3.—Devotion, substantial, and accidental . . . 41

Sect. 4.—Sanctity compared with religion.—Two elements of sanctity.—Its degrees.—Means of attaining it, especially in the religious state 50

Art. III.—Validity and obligation of a vow.—Can one make a vow to bind under pain of mortal sin, upon a subject that is not grave.—The vow to observe the rules.—The vow to avoid venial sin 55

The cessation of a vow—by impossibility of performance—by annulment—by dispensation—by commutation.—Who has power to dispense from vows?—To annul them?—The religious who forces those in authority to release him from his vows by dismissal.—The right of the person who makes a vow to commute it 57

CHAPTER TWO—The excellence of the religious vows, and the state of perfection 63

Art. I.—Excellence of the religious vows 63

Sect. 1.—The vows of religion compared with other vows.—Superiority of the vows of religion over all others 63

Sect. 2.—The evangelical counsels.—They are of two kinds.—Whether a person can vow poverty, chastity, and obedience outside of religion.—The vow to enter religion 64

Sect. 3.—Religious profession compared with baptism.—Remission of sins.—Death of the old man.—Newness of life 69

Sect. 4.—Religious profession compared with martyrdom.—The three-fold martyrdom of the religious.—His crucifixion 73

Art. II.—The religious state, or the state of perfection . 78

Sect. 1.—Meaning of the word *state*.—Difference between a state and an office.—Various states . . . 78

Sect. 2.—Peculiar merit of the religious state.—Consecration to God in this state.—Objection that the religious flees from difficulties of ordinary life.—Two sorts of difficulty.—Merit consists rather in what is good than in what is difficult.—The religious state a very good one for doing penance. 80

PAGE

Sect. 3.—A condition essential to merit in the religious state 84

Sect. 4.—The approbation of the Church, necessary for a religious institute.—In what it consists.—Whose office it is to give it.—Approbation by the Holy See, and its effects.—Practical consequences of approbation, for the religious, and for the faithful in general. 86

Art. III.—Religious Perfection 91

Sect. 1.—What is perfection? The perfection of Christian life is measured *substantially* by charity, and *accidentally* by the other virtues.—Definition of charity.—Its single motive.—Its two-fold object . . 91

Sect. 2.—The first object of charity, the love of God.—Love in general.—The love of God.—Its four denominations.—Charity is in the will, not in the sensitive appetite 94

Sect. 3.—Perfection of the love of God.—Whether a creature can love God perfectly.—Three kinds of perfection in the love which man can have for God.—Perfection of the love of God, in the act.—Explanation of the great commandment.—It can be fulfilled perfectly or imperfectly.—Loving God *wholly*, that is, loving all that is of Him and all that belongs to Him 97

Sect. 4.—Effects of the love of God, interior, and exterior 105

Sect. 5.—The second object of charity, the love of our neighbor.—The act by which we love God and our neighbor is the same act of charity.—Whether it is more meritorious to love God than to love our neighbor.—Explanation of the commandment to love our neighbor.—Three-fold perfection of this love . . . 110

Sect. 6.—Growth of charity in our souls.—It depends upon God, not upon man's natural virtue.—But our co-operation is necessary.—Charity may go on increasing until death.—It can increase indefinitely.—Whether it increases with every act.—How to make progress in charity—for beginners—for those somewhat advanced—for those who have attained a certain perfection. 114

Sect. 7.—The decrease and the loss of charity.—Sins of religious 122

PAGE

Sect. 8.—Charity in its relation to the other virtues. —*How it is the form of the others.*—No true virtue without it.—*How it is the mother of the others.*—It conceives and brings forth their acts.—*How it is their foundation.*—In what sense humility, faith, and charity are the foundation of the virtues.—How charity is the bond which unites them and keeps them in perfect unity.—*How it is their end*, all the others conducing to it,—especially the three which are consecrated in the vows of religion 127

Art. IV.—Means of perfection found in the religious state 132

Sect. 1.—The principal means of perfection, the vows 133

Sect. 2.—The secondary means of perfection, the rules. —What is a rule?—Its essential quality, to be *straight.*—Its two functions, to *direct*, and to *correct.*—The rule of an institute.—The rules.—The practise of the virtues according to the rules.—The obligation to strive for perfection by the observance of the rules 138

Art. V.—The vows of religion are taken according to the rule or the constitutions.—Various degrees in religious perfection.—Personal perfection and its growth . . 143

Art. VI.—Various states in the Church, compared in their relation to perfection.—Differences of *state*, of *office*, and of *degree.*—Incidental question: Do religious belong to the hierarchy?—Two-fold hierarchy, divine and ecclesiastical.—The latter again divided into two classes—the general hierarchy—and the special hierarchy of the regulars.—Functions of the secular clergy in the Church 145

CHAPTER THREE—Various kinds of vows of religion . . . 153

Art. I.—The religious state in general, and particular institutes 153

Art. II.—Variety of religious institutes 155

Sect. 1.—Reasons for this variety 155

Sect. 2.—The three principal varieties of religious institutes—for the contemplative life—the active life —and the mixed life.—The three compared . . . 156

PAGE

Art. III.—The vows of religion—solemn and simple—perpetual and temporary.—Compensations of a less lofty vocation.—Admission to the religious vows.—Three main conditions to their validity.—Duration of the novice-ship 159

Art. IV.—The desire which a religious may have, to go over to another institute 163

Art. V.—Esteem and love for one's vocation 167

Chapter Four—The virtues which form the object of the three vows of religion 171

Art. I.—Differences between the vow and the virtue.—Religious who take the vow and neglect the virtue.—Three classes of religious in communities 171

Art. II.—Obligations, other than those of the vows, which result from religious profession 176

Sect. 1.—What these obligations are 176

Sect. 2.—Duties of religious brotherhood 177

Sect. 3.—Evangelical detachment in regard to relatives 181

PART II

THE THREE VOWS OF RELIGION IN PARTICULAR

Chapter One—Religious poverty 189

Art. I.—Two principles relating to evangelical poverty . 189

Sect. 1.—*First:* it attacks cupidity, which is the primary foe of salvation and perfection 189

Sect. 2.—*Second:* it is the wall of religion 191

Art. II.—The vow of poverty 196

Sect. 1.—This vow considered in the religious who makes it.—It excludes the right of ownership in, or at least the right of freely disposing of, temporal

PAGE

goods.—Its matter and its extent vary according to the various institutes.—How it is violated.—How permission prevents its violation 197

Sect. 2.—Influence of this vow on the poverty which is common to the whole institute.—Degrees in this poverty—and in its perfection 200

Art. III.—The virtue of poverty.—Extent of its obligation, even aside from the vow.—Inordinate affection to temporal things.—Superfluities.—The common life.—Private stocks, or "peculia."—The distribution which a religious makes of his goods.—Practise and degrees of perfection of the virtue of poverty . 203

CHAPTER TWO—Religious chastity.—The vow and the virtue.—Means of preserving it intact.—Its advantages 209

CHAPTER THREE—Religious obedience 211

Art. I.—Some principles regarding obedience in general . 211

Art. II.—Obedience compared to other virtues 214

Art. III.—The vow of obedience.—Pre-eminence of this vow over the other two.—Its obligations.—Simple commands of superiors.—The binding force of the rules.—Religious discipline.—Defects harmful to religious obedience.—The perfection of this virtue; its three degrees 216

Art. IV.—Manifestation of conscience, and spiritual direction 218

Art. V.—Conclusion.—Our Lord Jesus Christ, the perfect model of obedience 221

ALPHABETICAL INDEX 225

PRINCIPLES OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE:

AN EXPLANATION OF THE "CATECHISM OF THE VOWS"

PART I

THE VOWS OF RELIGION IN GENERAL

This first part will explain the fundamental principles of the religious life. The little *Catechism of the Vows* could do no more than indicate these principles; we shall now try to bring them out as fully as their importance demands.

Chapter One

The General Concept of a Vow, Considered in the Vows of Religion

ARTICLE I

DEFINITION OF A VOW

A vow is defined as "a free and deliberate promise made to God of a possible and better act"; that is to say, of an act which is better than its opposite.

Let us consider the great practical lessons which flow from this definition.

Section 1—A Vow is a Promise

Of the promises men make to each other, we may distinguish three kinds: the simple promise, the promise of honor, and the contract-promise. By the first of these, a man binds himself to another, with this implied condition: "if I can do it easily, if no obstacle intervenes." In the second, a man's word engages his honor; and it would require a serious hindrance to relieve him of his obligation. But a promise of the third kind, once it is made and accepted in due form, constitutes a formal right in justice; if it is broken, there is ground for action before a court of law.

It is about the same with regard to promises which may be made to God. There may be a simple promise, for example to undertake some supererogatory work of piety, to please Him. In such case I mean to include the condition, "if nothing happens to prevent"; or at least I have no intention of binding myself under pain of sin.

We often promise God to fulfil a duty toward Him which already exists. It is a *resolution* which we thus formulate in His presence for the purpose of keying ourselves up to do our duty; we do not mean to undertake any new obligation.

Sometimes we put a degree of solemnity into this acknowledgement of an obligation already incurred, and we protest in the presence of witnesses that it is our purpose to fulfil it. Then we have as it were a promise of honor, whose effect will be to tighten the bond of conscience, but not to double it. Such are the promises of baptism, improperly called baptismal vows; such is especially the public renewal of those same promises, which we make at certain times in our life; and such also is the ceremony of renovation of vows, when those vows have never ceased to be in force.

In such cases no new obligation is imposed on the conscience.

A promise made to God, which may properly be called a promise of honor, is, for example, the act of consecration which is made upon entering some pious association. Although one may on such an occasion make a promise, even with a certain degree of solemnity, still one does not bind one's conscience, and there results no obligation under pain of sin.

I am speaking here of simple pious associations; for there are in the Church some associations, such as the Society of Saint-Sulpice, the Oratory, and others, in which, although there are no vows, a promise of perseverance may still become a matter of conscience, for the reason that an obligation has been assumed toward the men with whom one has become associated.

But there is also such a thing as a contract-promise made to God; that is, a vow which of itself creates a new obligation binding in conscience. We shall consider presently the gravity of this promise which is made to God Himself. Here it is enough to observe that if you had not the intention of binding yourself under pain of sin, there is no vow; and even if you are uncertain as to the intention you had at the time you made the promise, your conscience is not bound by such a doubtful obligation.

One may make a promise which is binding as a matter of faithfulness, under pain of venial sin; but the obligation of a vow is, as we shall see, quite different, and more serious.

Section 2—A Vow is a Deliberate Promise

We mean by a *deliberate act,* one in which these three elements are found: knowledge of what one is doing, the determination of the will to do it, and the power not to do it if one pleased. Now it is essential

to a vow that it be a perfectly deliberate act; without this element, there is no vow.

I. A vow requires *sufficient knowledge* of what one is promising to God. More, it requires mature reflection and a fitting realization of its importance; for, as Saint Thomas observes, "it is an act of the reason, and it is the part of reason to put order into our acts." [1] In this manner discretion is so necessary that generally it is well to take counsel beforehand of persons of sound judgment. In dealing with God, there is room for neither trifling nor recklessness. Unfortunately, those who take vows do not always think of this.

In the case of religious vows, which are binding for life, this requirement is even more indispensable. For these vows especially there must be an exact and precise knowledge of what one is promising. Superiors and masters of novices are therefore in duty bound to give full instruction on this point to those who aspire to the religious life. Nothing should be concealed from the candidate; no effort should be made to take him by surprise. A matter of this sort permits of none of those evasions which might be prompted by temporal interests or by that prudence which is human and earthly. For the same reason, it is the duty of the candidate and of the novice to examine matters, to seek information when in doubt, and to have a clear knowledge of what he is doing.

If a person pronounces vows in ignorance of some essential point relating to them, the vows are void for want of sufficient knowledge.

II. Every vow requires the consent of the will; and the vows of religion require a very special consent, which must be preceded by at least one entire year of trial. Not only is this a law of the Church; but it is a

[1] 2^a 2^{ae}, q. 88, a. 1.

condition imposed by her, without which the vows of religion would be invalid.[1]

Now this consent is based upon a *first* and a *second probation.* The *first probation,* whether it consists of a number of days which count as part of the novice-ship, or whether it precedes this under the name of the postulant-ship, provides a first examination whose purpose it is to sound one's own heart, and to learn the will of God regarding one's vocation. During this time one meditates alone and consults with the superiors of the order or congregation. It is worthy of note that the deliberation is to be done, not by the order alone, but by the candidate as well.

The part of the candidate is solely to discover whether he *have the will,* according to our Lord's words to the young man in the Gospel: "If thou wilt be perfect." [2] As, however, there is question here of a call on the part of God, and as our Lord says elsewhere: "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you"; [3] the candidate sounds his will to learn whether God be willing jointly with him, and in consequence whether he himself be willing *rightly,* that is, in response to God's moving grace which is the principal cause of every good will in man.[4] Now the ordinary means of deciding this all-important question is to examine two things: first, whether his wish to enter religion be according to right reason, that is, not a passing whim or a mere emotional impulse, and not contrary to any obligation which might lawfully retain him elsewhere; and secondly, whether his wish to enter be purely and truly

[1] Council of Trent. Sess. XXV, De regularibus et monialibus, cap. 15. Codex, c. 572 §1, 3°, and c. 555 §1, 2°.

[2] Matt. 19, *21.*

[3] John 15, *16.*

[4] "For it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to accomplish, according to His good will." Philip. 2, *13.*

for God, and not the prompting of human or unworthy motives.[1]

Such is the candidate's part. He may need a director or superiors to guide him by their counsel, and to protect him from illusions, but no one can make up his mind for him except himself.

It is the part of the religious society[2] to judge whether this same candidate be fit for the vocation in question, and to render the final decision as to whether or not there be really a call from God. For, to say nothing of possible illusions proceeding from the devil or from self-love, illusions which good will alone does not always dispell, grace itself sometimes inspires a good desire without decreeing its actual fulfilment. The good desire, in such a case, is already meritorious; but the sacrifice which is made of it in order to conform to God's will may be still more so. Religious superiors therefore study the qualities of the candidate in reference to their institute: his physical qualities, health and strength of body; his mental endowments, soundness and depth of mind, capabilities already acquired and aptitudes for acquiring new ones; his moral traits, inclinations, habits, and character. When it comes to this, the candidate must understand that he is no longer the judge. Were he to pronounce the decision, he might err through ignorance or presumption, or even through excessive modesty. His sole duty is to answer frankly the questions that are put to him, and to be sincere in revealing himself.

The *second probation,* or the *novice-ship,* gives the candidate an actual trial of the religious life with its difficulties according to the particular institute in ques-

[1] At least it is essential that the dominant motives be supernatural ones.

[2] The Code of Canon Law (c. 488, 1°), designates by the name *religio* any religious institute, whether it be an order or a congregation.

tion. Its purpose is to provide a practical confirmation of his election, his admission, and his whole vocation. If the novice undergo this test faithfully it will furnish a decisive proof of the genuineness of his vocation. Even though something may have been lacking in the work of the first probation, if the second one be well done it will be vain for the tempter thereafter to seek to disturb the soul. Whatever may have been the deficiencies of the novice's first deliberation, one might well say to him now: "You have knowingly persevered in this vocation after having a fuller experience of it; you have sought in it God's will and your own perfection; not only therefore has the first act been ratified, but any deficiencies there may have been in it have now been remedied."—After the completion of his first probation the novice's duty is no longer to deliberate, as though he had still his choice to make. Such indecision would paralyze his will. He must now submit courageously to the trials of the novitiate, and acquire the virtues and habits of the religious life, according to the institute to which God has called him.

III. A vow must be *free* interiorly and exteriorly. The Church declares absolutely void any vow pronounced under the influence of fear, if the fear be grave and unjustly produced.[1] Religious vows are rendered invalid by grave fear (whether unjustly produced or not), or by violence, or by fraud.[2] Reverential fear, for example fear on the part of a young girl who dares not resist the will of her father, is counted grave if it is accompanied by continued importunities, threats, or blows.[3]

In order to protect the timid sex against such abuses, the Church has decreed that the bishop or his repre-

[1] Codex, c. 1307 §3.
[2] Codex, c. 572 § 1, 4°.
[3] This rule of ecclesiastical jurisprudence is applied in proceedings for the nullification of marriages.

sentative must, by a three-fold examination, make sure that the candidate's choice has been perfectly free.

Section 3—A Vow is a Promise Made by Man to God

"I will pay my vows to the Lord." [1] This is a very serious thought, to be carefully weighed before taking a vow, and never to be forgotten after taking it: a vow is a *promise made to God Himself*.

And certainly when there is question of the religious vows, this thought deserves all our attention. If it weighs down the soul on the one hand, it is also capable of inspiring it. The vows of religion are a strict obligation which man assumes before God Himself; but God is good enough to give His assurances also to man; so that the emission of these vows may be termed a *synallagmatic contract* made between man and God. Hence a religious may and should say to himself:—

"I have made a contract with God; hence my obligations. But God also has deigned to make a contract with me; hence my advantages."

I. I have made a contract with God; my promise is to God Himself and not to men. Consequently my fulfilment of this promise can be nowise affected by the conduct of men toward me. It would be useless for me to plead the wrong-doing of my superior, or of my equal, or of any one else, as if that could release me from my promise to God; considerations which affect any one else but Him can afford no excuse in this matter.

I have made a promise to God, and it is He, the Almighty, who has made a record of my vow; He has entered it in His book, and no one but Himself can expunge it. He is keeping it to produce it on the day when He shall call me to account for its fulfilment.[2]

[1] Ps. 115, *14*.
[2] "Vow ye and pay to the Lord your God." Ps. 75, *12*.

I have made a promise to God, who is the All-Seeing One. He reads the inmost secrets of the heart; He sees the shortcomings which we may hide from the eyes of men; He sees through whited sepulchres which conceal rottenness; nothing is beyond His ken,—not the most hidden recesses of the soul; not the slightest infidelity, and He is a jealous God, who exacts all that has been promised Him, and who hates rapine in a holocaust.

I have made a promise to God, who is Unchangeable. Ah! Here let me pause and reflect. Man is so changeable; he is a leaf blown by the wind. He wills a thing today; but too often his mind is changed by tomorrow. And this want of constancy is especially apparent in these days. Yet, when one has made a promise to God, one must keep it. When once one is pledged to Him, the thing is done, and the religious may not go back on his word. Apostasy! What a terrible word! And yet, that is what it is; that is the language of the Church.[1] Alas! Some persons imagine that in this matter a change is as easy as to change one's clothes! You who made a promise to God, you would now turn back on account of some annoyance that has befallen. You have wearied of your holy state. At the first little grievance, you say: "Well, if that's the way things are, I will not stay." Listen to Him who accepted your promise. "I am the Lord," says He, "and I change not." [2] Listen to the prince of the Apostles: "Why hath Satan tempted thy heart that thou shouldst lie to the Holy Ghost, and take back that which is no longer thine? Before pledging thy word, wert thou not free? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thy heart? Thou hast not lied to men but

[1] Codex c. 644.
[2] Malach. *3, 6.*

to God."[1] And we know the punishment of Ananias and Saphira.

If we have to speak here of the suggestions of the tempter, it is only to put the religious on his guard upon two points. In the first place, this temptation to inconstancy is so dangerous that it ought to be vigorously repelled from the very beginning; and one should if possible even pay no attention to it. Secondly, it is of the highest importance not to give rise to such a peril by any act of our own, nor to foment it in any way, by sadness, or voluntary animosity, by touchiness, or resentment, resistance to authority, or the habitual violation of the holy rules. It is always an extremely serious matter wilfully to endanger one's own perseverance. Of all the temptations that may afflict a religious, there is scarcely any more disastrous than this.

Accordingly, in case such a temptation persists, it becomes a duty to manifest it to the proper authority. This is often the only remedy. On the other hand, charity usually forbids its disclosure to one's religious brethren; for this would be to inoculate them with the virus, and would generally amount to a very serious scandal. Confidences of this kind, made to equals, even without any evil intent, can scarcely fail to do them harm. Besides, generally speaking, none of them has the grace to heal such wounds as these. Finally, any one who is aware of a brother's being in such a peril is strictly bound in charity to inform the superior, that he may rescue the sufferer without delay.

While we are upon this very important subject let us

[1] Cf. Acts 5, *3, 4, 5.* "But Peter said: Ananias, why hath Satan tempted thy heart, that thou shouldst lie to the Holy Ghost, and by fraud keep part of the price of the land? Whilst it remained, did it not remain to thee? And after it was sold, was it not in thy power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thy heart? Thou hast not lied to men, but to God. And Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and gave up the ghost."

glance at the remedies which must be applied by souls whom a distaste for their vocation, or relaxation, or the temptations of the enemy may be driving toward the repudiation of their promises.

The first antidote will be to reflect again seriously upon God's right. I have made an offering of myself; there is an end of it, and I may no longer even hesitate. I will overcome the demurs of my lower nature and the instigations of my arch-enemy, by the energy of my will. It is true, through my own fault I have allowed that energy to flag; but after all I am still free, and, with God's grace, still master of myself. Instead of losing courage, as though it had now become impossible for me to will what I willed before, I will entrench myself firmly behind the absolute certainty of these two truths: when God commands me anything, that thing is possible for me; and He who enjoins a duty upon me is certainly present with His grace, if only I ask for it, to help me in its performance.[1]

Another remedy is to reflect upon the punishment which, even in this life, usually overtakes a soul that is unfaithful to its promise. You feel the weight of present hardship, and your imagination is sure even to exaggerate it. But, oh! please! let me warn you in advance,—only compare it with those so much heavier burdens to which the world condemns its votaries, in situations from which there is, however, no escape. And, however painful your present position may be, are you after all so sure that the being disloyal to your promises is going to improve your lot? Do you not know that experience almost invariably proves the con-

[1] "For God does not command the impossible; but when He issues a command He not only warns you to do what you can, and to pray where you can do no more, but He also gives His help, that you may be equal to the task." Council of Trent, Sess. VI, cap. 11.

trary? Would you, instead of profiting from those sad lessons, add another example to the list?

A third help, more effective because more winning, is the remembrance of the promises which your God has made to you in return for yours, a consideration which is the subject of the paragraphs which follow. Before entering upon it, however, let me give you a precious secret, which is a sovereign remedy in all the difficulties one meets in the service of God. It is this: always look at the bright side of things. Every object, among all those that duty or virtue demands of you, presents two quite different aspects, two faces as it were, one formidable, the other charming. In the present case for instance you feel repugnance because you are looking at the painful side, the side which shows you a duty or a hardship. Turn your attention rather to the pleasing side, which has the aspect of a wonderful gift from God, and your heart will receive new strength. Love and gratitude will be powerful stimulants to revivify your esteem for your vocation; and prayer will do the rest.

II. God has deigned to make a contract with me.

In the promise given, we have considered the binding duty; but there is besides a promise received, and it is well to consider also the advantages that flow from it. To close our eyes to everything in this contract except its burdens, would be a piece of senseless pusillanimity, alike disastrous to ourselves and injurious to God. True, every honor entails a duty; every lucrative position, every onerous contract, carries with it responsibilities. But only glance at the people of the world. Do they get anything for nothing? Do not they who quest after fortune or glory, keep their eyes on the prize rather than on the hardships of the struggle? "And they indeed," says the Apostle, "that they may

receive a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible one." [1]

It is certain that at the very moment when I was making my promises to God, He deigned to enter concurrently into an agreement with me.

God has made a contract with me. Can I ever appreciate the honor that the King of kings has done me? Whereas so many others are but common servants, He has admitted me to His dwelling, as one of His household; He has made me an officer of His palace; nay, He has by this solemn engagement exalted my soul to the dignity of His spouse. Is it possible that I should ever, even for a single day, cease to appreciate this honor, or become remiss in my efforts to be worthy of it?

God, who is supremely faithful to His promises, has contracted with me. Whatever be my natural weakness, I may count on Him to give me the strength that I need in my vocation. Whatever be the difficulties, He will always be present to sustain me. He assures me of this Himself by the mouth of His Apostle: "God is faithful, by whom you are called." [2]

God the All-Powerful has contracted with me; and I have become absolutely His property by the complete donation of myself to Him. Well, when the great God has a title to a thing, He defends it, and there is no one strong enough to take it from Him.[3]

God the All-Seeing has contracted with me. There is not the slightest service I render that shall escape His notice; everything shall be reckoned up faithfully and minutely. Not a single good action, however slight, not a single good intention, or aspiration, or even desire, is forgotten or without value in His sight.

[1] I Cor. 9, *25*.
[2] I Cor. 1, *9*.
[3] "No one can snatch out of the hand of My Father." John 10, *29*.

God the Unchangeable has contracted with me. Ah! there is my sure ground for confidence! I have only to keep myself steadfastly united to Him, and I am rid of my native instability. The Apostle St. Paul was vividly conscious of this truth. "I am sure," he exclaimed with marvelous assurance, "that nothing shall be able to separate me from the love of my God."[1] And is not this an experienced fact, even for me, weak as I am? That cupidity, that sensuality, that idolizing of self-will, which so easily draw into disorder those poor souls who have remained in the world,—these passions which before now, perhaps, have all but carried me away,—what domination have they over my heart now, since it is united to God and bound by His holy promise? This heart of mine is conscious of a new freedom; in spite of its native weakness it stands firm; it battles easily against inclinations which others find unconquerable; the wealth, the honors, the joys of the world, it contemns now lightly and with no regrets; and so strongly is it confirmed in the right course that years may pass without its having to deplore a single fault that is at all serious. How account for these marvels? Ah! it is the mighty hand of God that sustains His frail creature. "I the Lord have spoken and have done it," says the Prophet.[2] That is why I have so much reason to exclaim continually with David, "It is good for me to adhere to my God."[3]

Lastly, God, infinitely rich and generous Master, has contracted with me. Men thought perhaps that I was giving a great deal to God by my sacrifice; but, what-

[1] "I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord." Rom. 8, *38*.
[2] Ezech. 17, *24*.
[3] Ps. 72, *28*.

ever I may have had to offer Him, what did it amount to after all for such a Lord, and in comparison with what He was willing to give me in return? Truly it is here that we must "remember," as St. Paul says, "the word of the Lord Jesus, how He said : 'It is a more blessed thing to give, rather than to receive.'"[1] When a mighty prince accepts a gift, it is a sign that he wishes to bestow a favor. He confers an honor in the first place by the very fact of his having condescended to accept the gift; then with royal munificence he adds rewards which he makes proportionate to his own dignity. Whoever gives to God receives immediately in return His love, according to the teaching of the Apostle, "God loveth a cheerful giver";[2] and the love of God, to say nothing of its own worth, which exceeds every other treasure, becomes the fountain of all blessings, because He who is infinitely rich no sooner loves a person than He wishes to enrich him. God's liberality waits only for ours to show itself toward Him, in order to satisfy its immense desire of pouring itself out upon us; so that, if by the promise I made to Him I have offered all that I have and all that I am, He for His part has promised me not only the hundred-fold in this life and the fulness of His grace, but also that treasure in heaven which is none other than Himself, the ocean of all joys and of all beatitude.

Section 4—A Vow is a Promise of a Better Act

It would be doing no honor to God to promise Him an act less good than its opposite, for example to spend a certain sum of money in innocent enjoyment instead of giving it in alms. The reason is that by so doing one would presume to exclude this opposite act, which is the better one. One may, however, make a vow not

[1] Acts 20, *35.*
[2] II Cor. 9, *7.*

only of an act which is better in itself and in general (though this is the more usual case, and is evidently exemplified in the religious vows), but also of an act which, though less good in itself, is better in the individual case because of special circumstances. (For example, a young man who was unfit for the religious life, and who saw in marriage, though not the ideal, yet a means of making his salvation more secure, might vow to marry.)

ARTICLE II

A VOW IS AN ACT OF THE VIRTUE OF RELIGION

The *Catechism* does no more than to state this truth; its development will afford very touching reflections for religious persons.

Section 1—A Vow Partakes of the Nature of a Sacrifice

The excellence of a vow is apparent from the fact that it is an act of the highest worship, or *latria*, which is paid to God alone as an acknowledgement of His supreme dominion and infinite greatness.

One may make a promise to the Blessed Virgin or to some saint; but such a promise would not be a true vow, unless one at the same time bound one's self to God under pain of sin. Now this precisely shows that a vow partakes of the nature of a sacrifice; for in a vow there is an immolation to God, effected by the changing of the thing offered, inasmuch as it becomes, in strict obligation, God's.

A vow is a special participation in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. In pronouncing it and in fulfilling it, we "fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in our flesh";[1] that is to say, we contribute

[1] Coloss. 1, *24*.

that part which He has reserved for us that He may enable us to merit the application of His divine sacrifice. It is in this way that the bloody sacrifice of Calvary must be applied to men by the unbloody sacrifice of the altar. The Mass is at once the oblation of the natural Body of Jesus Christ, and of His mystical body (Christians); so that the immolation of the Head redounds to the benefit of those members especially who take care to present themselves with Him for the sacrifice. Now this immolation of the members shines nowhere with such brilliant lustre as it does in martyrdom and in the vows of religion. It is for this reason that the particularly appropriate manner for religious to celebrate or to assist at Holy Mass is for them to offer themselves as victims with Jesus Christ, by renewing the holocaust of their vows.

Section 2—Concerning the Virtue of Religion

As its name indicates, religion is the great virtue of a religious; when he pronounces his vows, it becomes the virtue peculiar to his state. Hence it is important that he should know not only what it is but all that concerns it. In order to provide this instruction the more thoroughly, let us outline the beautiful teachings of Saint Thomas on this virtue.[1]

§I

"Religion," says the holy Doctor, "is a virtue which belongs to justice, nay which forms the chief part of it; for by it man renders to God the worship and homage which he owes Him."

I. Religion is a part of justice, because the essence of justice is to give to every one what is due him; and it is the chief part of it, because of all our debts the

[1] 2ª 2ae, q. 81.

one that is paramount beyond doubt or comparison is that which we owe to our Creator and Lord.

Let us imagine this Supreme Lord looking down from high heaven and surveying the whole earth. He sees three very different classes of men. The first consists of all those, alas! who deny Him, forget Him, offend Him,—an innumerable tribe of intelligent creatures who, by refusing to pay to their Creator the worship and homage they owe Him, are violating the most fundamental demands of justice.

Those in the second class acknowledge Him, it is true, as their Lord; they do not deny His claim upon them. But they are so deeply absorbed in temporal affairs that they seldom think of God. Any care for the payment of what they owe Him, has but a small place in their lives. This great God, who should be all-in-all to them, receives from them so small a number of acts of worship! And the longer the intervals between those acts, the more miserly and cold are the hearts that render them. This is the lowest degree of religious observance, amounting too often to nothing more than a formality. The members of this class fail to reach even the irreducible minimum, or to fulfil the strict obligations of justice.

The third class presents in the sight of God men who are truly religious. Penetrated with a realization of the purpose for which they were created, and drawing right conclusions from this basic truth, they put down as their first duty that which they owe to their Creator. Foremost among this class should be found those who are called *religious,* for they have *entered religion;* that is, they have embraced a state which aims at the perfect realization in them of the virtue of religion; and if they are such as their name and their profession demand, it is surely upon them that the eyes of the Lord rest with the greatest complacency. He

Himself says of the holy place which is specially set apart for religious worship: "My eyes and my heart shall be there always." [1]

II. The virtue of religion renders to God the worship and homage which is His due. But in what does this worship and homage consist? The Angelic Doctor gives a two-fold etymology, which yields two pregnant thoughts, and from which he derives the essential idea of religion. The word *religion,* he says, comes from the Latin verb *religare, to bind,* or from the verb *re-eligere, to re-elect, to choose anew.*[2] Religion, then, binds us anew to Almighty God from whom we were separated. It causes us to choose God again, whereas we had lost Him by negligence; that is, according to the force of the word *negligere, nec eligere,* because we would have no more of Him. Yes, God is He to whom man must again attach himself radically as to his supreme and inseparable source; He is also the one toward whom man must orient anew his erring heart, as toward his last end, in such wise as to take possession once more, by faith and good works, of this God whom he has lost through negligence.

Such is the two-fold notion of the worship we owe to God; and this doctrine on religion applies to the whole human race. Man, naturally bound to God his Creator, by virtue of his origin, was besides supernaturally bound to Him by *grace,* which he had received as an extraordinary gift. But the sin of Adam unfortunately broke this bond, and it was the work of a Repairer to connect man once more with his Source-Principle. As an aftermath of this same sin, *man's*

[1] III Kings 9, *3.*

[2] "Religion comes from *religare,* because it binds us to Almighty God. — Religion comes from *re-eligere,* because by it we choose God anew after having lost Him through negligence." According to modern scholars, religion comes, not from *religare,* but from *re-eligere,* to re-elect or choose anew.

will, no longer caring for God, guiltily made choice of other objects of desire; and a Savior was needed to cure this will, and make it capable of choosing anew Him who is its Last End. Torn again from God by fresh sins, man, with the aid of the ever merciful grace of Jesus Christ, must exert himself once more to win a fresh reunion with his Source-Principle and to direct his will again to his End. This requires constant effort, daily attention, in this earthly life; and it is the part of religion to accomplish this work. To have religion, to practise religion, means nothing else than this.[1]

But this universal principle finds a very special application in the life of the religious; it urges him to fulfil all his duties from these two master motives,—God, my First Principle; God, my Last End. God is my First Principle, to whom I must unite myself ever more closely and completely; God is my Last End, to whom my heart must cling by constant choice and with renewed effectiveness. To attain this end, what efforts the religious has to make! What vacancies he has to fill! What daily shortcomings to repair! What perverse inclinations to subdue! And it is for this very reason that the religious life offers so great a variety of means: the vows, the rules, the spiritual exercises, the guidance of superiors, all are designed to help him to join himself ever more perfectly to his Source, and to choose anew with ever increasing energy of will his Last End.

III. Let us now consider more fully what is the debt which the religious ought to pay to the Lord.

In the first place, man owes to God, and to God alone, the worship of latria, or adoration. We owe

[1] To summarize briefly the author's thought—religion unites us to God by the fusion of two elements: first, divine grace; secondly, man's good will corresponding with this grace so as to renounce sin and render to God the homage which He expects from us.

Him also obedience in whatever He requires of us by formal precept; and this excludes all sin, whether grave or venial. But, in the third place, we owe Him, besides, everything that we can possibly do for His service and glory, even though He does not order it under pain of sin. All our works are due to Him because He is our Creator and Lord, our First Cause and our end, and because we are in every way His servants. True, these works which He does not strictly require are called "supererogatory"; yet, strictly speaking, in view of the demands of His greatness, there can be no such thing on our part as an act of pure liberality; far from it, however much we may do for Him, we shall never pay our debt in full. We shall always have to acknowledge in the presence of this Supreme Master: "We are unprofitable servants; we have done (only) that which we ought to do." [1] Hence the name of *the just,* which is given to all His servants; even in doing heroic actions for His honor, they do no more than to observe justice.

Now we address ourselves to religious: is there any one who is obligated to God more justly or more completely than you are? But let us hasten to add: is there any one so favorably situated as you are for the easy fulfilment of these obligations?

§II

A second doctrine of Saint Thomas on the virtue of religion will show how this duty is to be fulfilled in practise. We shall consider in it: first, the religious life in all its details; secondly, the essence of the religious spirit; and thirdly, true practise of religion.[2]

I. "The virtue of religion," says the holy Doctor,

[1] Luke 17, *10.*
[2] 2ª 2ªe, q. 81, aa. 1, 2.

"has two sorts of acts: its own acts, which it formally produces of itself, and those which it enjoins upon other virtues, making these acts its own by referring them to its own end, and thus enhancing their value."

Of the acts peculiar to religious, some are interior, others exterior.

These interior acts constitute the principal worship which we owe to God. The foremost among them, which must pitch the key for all the others, is *devotion;* for devotion is nothing else than the readiness of the will to set to work at whatever is for the honor and service of God. The second of these acts is *prayer,* by which man honors God and bows down to Him by acknowledging that he depends on Him as the fountain of all blessings.

The exterior acts of religion are adoration, sacrifice, offerings, praise, etc. An explanation of these subjects would indeed be useful, but it would lead us too far. We shall, however, return later on to the subject of devotion, because of its importance.[1]

The acts which the virtue of religion may demand, as it were, of other virtues, are countless. Everything comes under its dominion, and derives its merit from the very fact that it is referred by religion to the honor and worship of God. Such, for example, are acts of mercy, of temperance, and of mortification, according to the words of Saint James: "Religion, clean and undefiled before God and the Father, is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their tribulation, and to keep one's self unspotted from this world." [2]

The same may be said even of acts which proceed from some lawful natural affection, such as love for relatives and friends, a liking for the study of science, an inclination toward this or that honest employment,

[1] Sect. 3.
[2] James 1, *27.*

etc. Religion does not suppress these affections; it purifies them, cleanses them of the dross of self-love, gives them a firm foundation and a perfect development by referring them to God; and thus makes of them holy affections which have God Himself for their principle and for their end.

There is no action, however indifferent or commonplace in itself, which religion cannot make its own, as the Apostle earnestly teaches us: "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God." [1]

Here we have all the details of the religious life. Not only can a religious transform all he does into acts of religion, by the intention he has,—a thing which other Christians can do as well; but his vows, especially that of obedience, are ever present to invest all his works with a far more special religious value, by referring them in a more excellent manner to the worship of the divine Master.

II. Now here is the very essence of the religious spirit which must imbue all our actions. "Man, by the virtue of religion," it is still Saint Thomas who is speaking, "gives reverence and honor to God as the First Principle, not only of the creation but of the direction of all things, and particularly of man himself. The Lord tells us by His Prophet; 'If then I be a Father, where is My honor?' [2] Now the function of a father is first to bring his children into existence, and then also to have the control of them." [3]

Let us appreciate the wide compass of this doctrine. The religious spirit essentially consists in always looking upon God as the First Principle, in order ever to honor Him loyally as such. But where does God

[1] I Cor. 10, *31*.
[2] Malach. 1, *6*.
[3] 2^a 2^{ae}, q. 81, a. 3.

manifest Himself as the First Principle? In the creation and government of the entire universe. Everywhere, then, the religious spirit makes man alert to recognize God's action, and careful to give Him homage. Yet there is one place in particular where he must pay still closer attention and apply still more constant diligence, that is in his own person; and it is in himself especially that he likes to think of God as the First Principle, in order to honor Him who, both in the natural and in the supernatural order, has made, preserves, and governs, His rational creatures with the authority and goodness of a Father.

This, no doubt, was the religious spirit from the beginning of the world; and even among that people where the law of fear was paramount because of the hardness of their hearts, some truly religious souls recognized in the God of majesty this character of a Father. But much more deeply did Jesus Christ imprint on religion this fatherly character, when, incorporating with Himself in the divine Sonship all those who believe in Him, "He gave them power to be made the sons of God." [1]

Now, this religion of sonship, in which the Holy Ghost Himself makes us cry, "Abba, Father," [2]—in whom should it hold more perfect sway than in the mind and heart of the religious in relation to his heavenly Father. When we read the lives of the saints, that of Saint Teresa for example, we are struck by the way in which they could combine in their relations to God the most profound reverence with the most tender love. Ah! it is only between men that familiarity breeds contempt, or that reverence embarrasses the outpouring of love. It is quite otherwise

[1] John 1, *12.*

[2] "For . . . you have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba, Father." Rom. 8, *15.*

with God, because the Holy Ghost is present to produce a deep sense both of majesty and of amiability.

III. Lastly, let us state what is, according to Saint Thomas, the true practise of religion, necessary doubtless for all Christians, but which the religious especially must have in the whole make-up of his life. "The virtue of religion," he says, "gives God by the same acts both honor and service: honor has in view the divine perfections which call for reverence; service answers to the dependence of man, who is by this natural condition bound to render homage to God. Hence honor and service are found together, and necessarily so, in all acts of religion: by all of them man acknowledges at once the excellence of God and his own dependence on Him; whether he offer God some homage, such as adoration, praise, sacrifice, etc., or whether he ask or receive some bounty from the divine Goodness." [1]

Who can fail to see how essential this is, both in Christian life and in religion. In the solid and genuine practise of the virtue of religion, we must never dissociate these two elements, God's honor and His service: for if He requires and graciously accepts our formal acknowledgments of His perfections, no less does He demand of us the submission of our wills and the tribute of service.

§III

The virtue of religion is not a theological virtue, because God is not its immediate object, as He is the immediate object of faith, hope, and charity. Religion

[1] 2^a 2^{ae}, q. 81, a. 3.—Some of the actions which are inspired by the religious spirit, bear more closely on the worship of God, for example the singing of the divine office; others again look more directly to His service, as for instance submission to the law of work.

has for its object, not the last end itself, but all those acts which are means to its attainment.

It is therefore only a moral virtue, but it is the first of all these in dignity, being more closely related to God than the others, since its works tend directly to God's glory.

Moreover, Saint Augustine tells us that man honors God by faith, hope, and charity; and these virtues, by supplying the energy that puts in motion the acts of religion, make these acts their own. This principle is teeming with practical consequences. The more brightly burns the vital flame of faith, hope, and charity in the soul, the more will these virtues quicken the virtue of religion and cause it to bear fruit in acts for the honor and service of God. On the other hand, in proportion as these virtues wane in vitality, religion also becomes dormant, until it falls at last into complete inaction.

§IV

The foregoing remarks on the virtue of religion bring out in high light the excellence of the religious state. He is a religious who consecrates his life to the practise of religion.

"By a figure of speech," says Saint Thomas, "persons who have dedicated themselves entirely to the service of God, and offered themselves to Him, as it were, by way of *holocaust,* are called *religious.*" [1] Religious persons should therefore, in accordance with their state, be as it were the personification of the virtue of religion,—religion alive and always in action. This is their essential duty; but it is also their peculiar merit, the better part which God has chosen for them.

[1] 2^a 2^{ae}, q. 186, a. 1.—In the form of sacrifice called a holocaust, the victim was entirely consumed.

They must ever apply to themselves the words of Saint Leo: "Realize your dignity, O Christians, and since you have received a participation in the divine nature, never let your conduct degenerate to the lower plane of a worldly life." As often as the name, religious, is pronounced, it is for him who bears it, a call to fervor, like that which Saint Bernard addressed to himself, "Bernard, to what end art thou come hither?" This name is like a spiritual mirror held before the eyes of the religious, or like an echo which reiterates constantly in his heart that deep lesson which the Child-God teaches us in His first public act of religion: "I must be about My Father's business." [1]

Section 3—Devotion

Devotion is, as we have said, the primary and most important act of the virtue of religion; it is through it that the will exercises all its other acts,—those which religion itself produces, as well as those which other virtues produce under the influence of religion.

We must distinguish two kinds of devotion: substantial, and accidental.

§I. Substantial Devotion [2]

I. Substantial devotion is simply a certain readiness of the will by which it lends itself to whatever belongs to the service of God.[3]

The word devotion comes from the Latin *devovere,* and the Romans called by the name *devoti,* those who, like the two Decii in Livy's history, devoted themselves

[1] Luke 2, 49.
[2] 2^a 2^{ae}, q. 82, aa. 1, 2.
[3] St. Thomas: "Devotion seems to be nothing else than a certain willingness to devote one's self to whatever belongs to God's service." 2^a 2^{ae}, q. 82, a. 1.

to their gods and to death for their country's sake. To be *devout* means, therefore, to give one's life and one's actions with a ready will to the honor and service of God; and devotion is not, as some imagine, a matter of sentiment, but it consists in *being devoted*. Its essence does not lie precisely in pious practises, but in the solicitude of the will to set about whatever work God may ask of it.

Saint Francis of Sales speaks of devotion in the same terms as the Angelic Doctor. "It is nothing else," says he, "than a certain agility and vivacity of spirit which causes us to work for God carefully, frequently, and with alacrity."

II. The special *enemy of devotion* is *spiritual sloth*, or *tepidity*.

Sloth in general is a sadness which weighs down the soul and shatters its courage to such a degree that a man has no will for anything.[1] Sloth is vicious under two aspects: vicious in itself because it treats as evil something which is good, that is, the action in question; vicious in its effects because it hinders one from doing good. Besides, since no one can rest under the burden of sadness, and since we cannot live without satisfaction of some sort, sloth drives the soul to seek sensual compensations. Then, after having turned away from the good which makes it sad, the will ends by becoming so perverse as even actively to antagonize that good. Hence follow aversion for acts of virtue, and dislike for the persons whose advice or example reminds the slothful one of his duty.

Now apply all this to spiritual sloth, which is the *wilful* dislike of the soul for works pertaining to God's service, and you have a picture of the dreadful evil of tepidity with its effects. Notice that there is here no

[1] 2^a 2^{ae}, q. 35, a. 1.

question of involuntary distastes, when in spite of them the will stands firm in the fulfilment of its duties.

III. *The causes of devotion* show how it can be enkindled in the heart. Its *proximate cause* is *charity;* its *remote cause, contemplation.*[1]

Charity is the proximate cause of devotion because it is the part of love to make a friend forward for the service of his friend. Now, it is God who implants and increases charity in us: of Him, therefore, we must entreat the cause, charity, if we would possess the effect, devotion. Besides, charity thrives on devotion, just as all friendship lives and grows by the exercise of its acts. It is thus we must nourish holy love in our souls. Listen to Saint Francis of Sales: "By means of this agility and vivacity of spirit in our will, charity produces acts in us, or we produce them through it, with readiness and zest. Charity is a spiritual fire, and devotion fans it to flame, making it prompt, active, and diligent."

The remote cause of devotion is contemplation; that is, especially meditation and spiritual reading. It is a fact that every act of the will flows from some conception of the understanding. Now, devotion springs from the consideration of two thoughts,—the goodness of God, and our own wretchedness.

The consideration of God's goodness begets in us love of Him, which is the proximate cause of devotion. Listen to the Psalmist: "It is good for me to adhere to my God, to put my hope in the Lord God."[2] *Absolutely speaking,* the pondering of the divine attributes in themselves is most productive of devotion. But, *for us,* because of the weakness of human nature, there is nothing so potent to awaken devotion as to

[1] 2^a 2^{ae}, q. 82, aa. 3, 4.
[2] Ps. 72, 28.

meditate upon Jesus Christ Our Lord, God become man like us and for our sakes, upon Jesus Christ who was for us God's grace in visible form, upon our God and Savior in his loving and lovable humanity.[1] This is the "book written within and without," [2] which we must chiefly read and ponder, following the example of Saint Paul, who even after he had been rapt to the third heaven, professed to know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified.[3]

The second source of devotion is the consideration of our own wretchedness. The more deeply we are penetrated with it, the more it will make us feel the need of support from God, and hence the more we shall strive to merit His help by the fidelity of our service, according to those words of David: "I have lifted up my eyes to the mountains, from whence help shall come to me. My help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth." [4] Moreover, the sight of our own misery will banish presumption, which by giving man a false reliance on his own strength prevents him from submitting to God.

All this shows the necessity of meditation, and explains why it is called an *exercise of devotion.* It enkindles devotion, if well done; but if done perfunctorily and without earnestness, it lets that blessed flame flicker and die.

IV. *The effects of devotion.* Principally and directly, it produces joy; and yet indirectly it produces a sort of sadness, a sadness which is of God.

[1] "For the grace of God our Savior hath appeared to all men." Tit. 2, *11.*

[2] "And I saw in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne, a book written within and without." Apoc. 5, *1.*

[3] "For I judged not myself to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." I Cor. 2, *2.*

[4] Ps. 120, *1, 8.*

Reflection on the goodness of God, one of the sources of devotion, of itself fosters spiritual joy. "I remembered God," says the holy king David, "and was delighted." [1] Worldly persons imagine that devotion is woeful and gloomy. They know not how far the contentment of a heart that belongs entirely to God, transcends the joys and delights of the world. Or they think only of those who drag themselves languidly in God's service. Let them look at those who have true devotion, and they will invariably find hearts that are pleased with God because they are striving in everything to please Him. This is the example given us by all the saints: Saint Romuald, who served the divine Master with so much fervor for more than a hundred years, had such a cheerful countenance that he rejoiced all who laid eyes on him; Saint Francis Xavier was so amiable that a pagan king of Japan conceived the happy thought of going to heaven in order to enjoy his company.[2] Like the saints, every true servant of God can and should give this edification to all men.

Yet this same consideration of the divine goodness engenders indirectly in the devout soul a certain sadness, the sadness of the exile, who repeats with the Psalmist, "My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God; when shall I come and appear before the face of God? My tears have been my bread day and night." [3] But this very sadness is one of the beatitudes of this world. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." [4]

As for the thought of its own miseries, the devout soul finds in this, matter for sorrow no doubt, but also

[1] Ps. 76, *4*.
[2] Life of St. Francis Xavier.
[3] Ps. 41, *3,4*.
[4] Matt. 5, *4*.

reason for joy; for it reflects that misery humbly acknowledged infallibly draws down commiseration. This rejoicing is a necessary element in the beatitude of those that mourn; without it the sight of our wretchedness would only break our spirit and generate a sadness that would not be according to God. Voluntary worrying in God's service is not a good sign of true devotion; for, one who worries fails to unite to a sense of his ills the hope of obtaining relief from them.

V. Substantial devotion, if it is habitual in a soul, is called *fervor of spirit;* it springs from charity, and in turn nourishes it; but this genuine fervor, like charity itself, inheres essentially in the will, and not in movements of the affections merely.

§II. Accidental Devotion

I. *Accidental* devotion is that in which the soul experiences a certain sweetness which sustains the will in its alacrity for God's service. Substantial devotion may very well exist without this.

II. This *suavity* which may be experienced in devotion is of two kinds; either it charms the will alone, or it makes itself felt in the affections of the soul, and, as they say, in the inferior appetite.

Suavity of the first kind is a purely *spiritual* joy. Usually, even in the throes of sacrifice, man enjoys a certain contentment of soul; it is the natural recompense of the soul for being forward in an act of virtue. Often, however, this sense of contentment remains submerged, as when for example the will has to make an effort in spite of sensible pain, or to overcome the difficulty of the task. In order that this suavity may make itself strongly felt, the additional unction of God's grace is required. We then have the

first kind of accidental devotion, that which produces a deep joy in the will without our affections having any part in it. It may be compared to the joys experienced by the angels.

This purely spiritual suavity is what Saint Francis of Sales seems to have had in mind in the following graceful description: "Devotion," he says, "is the sweetest of all sweetness, and the queen of all virtues; for it is charity brought to perfection. If charity is milk, devotion is the cream upon it; if charity is a plant, devotion is its fruit; if it is a gem, devotion is its radiance; if it is a balm, devotion is its fragrance, —that aroma of suavity which invigorates men and rejoices the angels." Saint Bernard, with a no less happy touch, though in fewer words, described devotion as a *"flower of the world to come."*

Accidental devotion may, however, appear in a different form. Certain pleasant emotions may be sensibly felt in the lower part of the soul. We then have what is properly called *sensible devotion.*

If these pleasant sensible emotions are accompanied by real devotedness of the will, the devotion is genuine; but if there is only the impression on the affections without that devotedness which shows itself in works, the devotion is only apparent and deceptive. It is therefore by its fruits, and not by mere feeling, that sensible devotion may be known.

It may be not only a false show but even a snare of the evil spirit or an illusion of self-love, and hence a foe to true devotion. It will be helpful to consider its sources.

The sensible sweetness which accompanies devotion may spring from any of the four causes which follow:

1. The intensity of the act of charity. For, Saint Thomas tells us [1] that when an act of the will is in-

[1] $1^a\ 2^{ae}$, q. 30, a. 1.

tense, it may produce so great a contentment that its overflow will flood the lower part of the soul. This happens especially when, to a strong act of charity, God adds the unction of a special grace. Then occur sensible emotions, tears, and sometimes extraordinary effects such as swoons, anesthesia, levitation, and those phenomena of ecstatic states that we read of in the lives of the saints. One exclaims with the Psalmist, "My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God."[1]

2. The action of the good angel. When a soul does or wills to do some act for the service of God, the good spirit often approaches to lend his aid, and, by an operation which is within an angel's natural powers,[2] he calls forth in the lower part of the soul emotions which produce the sensible sweetness of devotion. His purpose is to second the will in well-doing by supplying it with this agreeable refreshment and this reinforcement against the distastes of the flesh.

3. But the evil spirit as well possesses the normal power of arousing in us emotions and sensible sweetnesses which we may mistake for devotion; and he does arouse them, though we do no good act, or do it not for God's sake. His purpose always is to do us harm by this delusive bait, and insidiously to contrive our ruin.

4. Lastly, in some impressionable natures self-love alone manages to conjure up a semblance of devotion by means of these sensible thrills. This fruit of self-love cannot be good, even though it occasion good acts; for such acts are tainted with the bad intention. Sham allurements such as these only decoy the soul farther and farther away from the true course of the service of God.

[1] Ps. 83, *3*.
[2] See Saint Thomas, 1ª, q. 111.

To sum up, there is a purely spiritual suavity which, as Saint Paul says, is entirely above the senses; seldom experienced by souls of an ordinary degree of devotion, it is frequent with the saints, for they, according to Saint Dennis, because of their superabundant charity, share already in this life the delights of the angels. As for the sweetnesses of sensible devotion, these again may indicate an ardent charity, but they are far from being infallible signs of it. A more virile temperament may be naturally less susceptible to emotional impressions, even in the more intense acts of the will, although often enough God has endowed great souls with hearts that were full of tenderness. On the other hand, sensible consolations may be tokens of a lesser charity; for it is wills that are weak or as yet untrained that the good spirit usually reinforces in this way. Nay, he even brings these inducements to souls who are without charity, in order to draw them to God. Finally, they are deceptive shams when they come from the devil or from self-love.

The conclusion is that one must above all pin one's faith to substantial devotion.

But may one not also desire and strive for sensible devotion?

Let me answer, to begin with, by citing a proposition which the Church condemned in Molinos, a false mystic of the Seventeenth Century: "Whoever desires and embraces sensible devotion . . . does wrong in desiring it and in striving to have it."[1] The truth is therefore to be found in the contradictory proposition: *such a person does not do wrong.* And in truth, sensible devotion is a gift of God;[2] we must therefore appreciate it, and if He deigns to bestow it, accept it

[1] Proposition condemned by the Church: Denzinger-Bannwart, 15th Edition, n. 1247.

[2] That is to say, of course, aside from those illusions already mentioned, which proceed from the devil or from self-love.

gratefully. It is sometimes a help which our weakness requires, a necessity to keep us in the right path; we must therefore ask for it with an humble sense of the need we have of it. It is very well adapted to advance us in every virtue; we must therefore desire it, try to deserve it by mortification and purity of life, and when God grants it, use it faithfully as a means of spiritual progress.

Secondly, I answer that, since sensible devotion may be illusory, we must notice carefully whence it comes, as has been already pointed out. Besides, even when the good spirit is its author, we may use it well or ill. Certainly he is abusing it who, instead of drawing from it strength and preparedness against the time of trial, thinks only of its enjoyment. This is what Saint John of the Cross calls *spiritual sensuality,* an inordinate attachment to the gift instead of to the giver. To such sensual souls God is doing a favor when He withdraws consolation from them, just as a physician will prescribe a diet to cure an ailment that has been caused by gluttony. In fine, it is not sensible feelings that make us pleasing to God. On the contrary, often enough we are the less agreeable to Him the more we take complacency in ourselves and the more we flatter ourselves that things seem to us to be going so well. What pleases the divine Master is humility and a deep realization of our wretchedness; it is the readiness of our will to do His will in all things; it is our solicitude for the practise of solid virtues, whether He give us many or few spiritual consolations.

Section 4—Sanctity Compared with Religion[1]

I. What is sanctity?

An ardent and generous heart makes it easy for a person who enters religion to say: In this state I

[1] 2^a 2^{ae}, q. 81, a. 8.

wish to become a saint. A spiritless religious on the other hand will say to himself and repeat to others: As for me, I make no pretension of becoming a saint; that would be too high a goal for my weakness. To the first, the Angelic Doctor replies that in order to be a saint he has but to be a true religious. As for the second, he will learn that not to wish to become a saint is to give up hope of being a true religious; it is to be a religious only in name; it is to possess but the semblance, the habit, the mask, of religion.

In truth, as Saint Thomas tells us, the distinction between religion and sanctity is but a *mental distinction.* That is to say, the difference lies in the aspects under which our mind considers them; in substance, in reality, they are identical. The essence of religion is to render to God the worship that is His due, by referring to God its own acts and those which it influences other virtues to produce; and *"sanctity consists essentially in this, that the soul itself and all its acts be fixed in God."* [1]

Both perform exactly the same work; but religion does it in order to pay the debt we owe to the Supreme Majesty; and sanctity does it to bring the soul to its perfection by uniting it to the infinitely perfect Being. Under still another aspect this is also the work of charity; for this virtue unites us to God heart to heart, and stamps the acts of all our other virtues with the seal of divine love.

Moreover, just as there are in the practise of religion and of charity two degrees, one absolutely necessary for salvation, and another which rises higher, so too we must distinguish two ranges of sanctity, one without which there is no hope of heaven, the other not limited to this inferior scale.

[1] Saint Thomas: "Sanctitas dicitur, per quam mens hominis seipsam et suos actus applicat Deo."

Even ordinary Christians should be told that for them to be deliberately content, through cowardice, to choose the lower degree as the goal of their endeavors, is to subject their salvation to grave risk. For in order to have reasonable chances of attaining an objective, we must aim at least a little above it. Man almost always falls below his ideal.

And as for the religious, his obligation to strive for perfection permits him still less to be satisfied with either charity or sanctity of ordinary caliber; just as his name reminds him that he cannot be content with the ordinary degree of religion.

II. Saint Thomas explains for us the two elements of sanctity and the precise notion of each. "The name sanctity," he says, "includes two things, freedom from stain, and constancy."

1. In order that the soul may be able to fix itself and its acts in God, it must be pure, according to those words of the Apostle: "What fellowship hath light with darkness?" [1] Every substance is debased by being mixed with an inferior substance; gold, alloyed with lead, is no longer pure gold. So the soul is defiled by clinging to objects which are beneath it. It must disentangle itself from what is low in order to become engrossed in God.

There is a Greek word that expresses this first element of sanctity: *agios, sine terra,* that which is not defiled by contact with the earth. Pure water is like a beautiful crystal; mixed with earth, it is nothing but mud.[2]

[1] II Cor. 6, *14.*

[2] Bailly's dictionary derives ἅγιος, holy, from the primitive root, ἀγ, to be pure. The Greek therefore connects the idea of sanctity with that of purity. This is substantially the statement made by Father Cotel. If the latter be mistaken in deriving ἅγιος from ἀ privative and γῆ, earth, his text retains its value, not indeed as an argument—no etymology, however exact, can pretend to this—but as a comparison or allegory.

This department of sanctity, we see at once, includes everything that pertains to detachment and self-denial. We shall not now go into details. One word only: there is nothing more efficacious to key us up to this purity of heart than to meditate frequently upon it in the lives of the saints. Saint John the Baptist, Saint Aloysius of Gonzaga, and all those countless virgins of spotless purity—how earnest was their solicitude to avoid all contact with the things of earth! Prayer and good will can enable us to follow in the footsteps of the saints; and souls who respond wholeheartedly to the inspirations of grace will come to realize by experience that the lapse of centuries has not dried up the springs of holiness, and that the arm of God is not shortened.

2. Latin gives us the word which expresses the second element of sanctity: *sanctus,* that is *sancitus,* or *firmatus,* which means firmly established, inviolable.[1]

A saint is a person whose soul with all its acts is so intimately absorbed in God that separation is no longer possible, because a very strong bond, that of charity, holds the soul fixed in that union.

Stability is a necessary quality of sanctity, because the soul is united to God as its First Principle and Last End; and such a union leaves no room for inconstancy. Listen to Saint Paul: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation? or distress? or famine? or nakedness? or danger? or persecution? or the sword? . . . I am sure that neither death nor life. . . . shall be able to separate us from the love of God." [2]

These two aspects of sanctity are found even in things which belong to divine worship, such as temples,

[1] According to Freund the primary meaning of *sancio* is "to render inviolable by a religious consecration."

[2] Rom. 8, *35, 38, 39.*

sacred vessels, and so on. But how much higher than the sanctity of any material object is the sanctity of man, when he keeps his mind, his heart, and his body remote from every stain, and his whole soul with all its acts steadfastly absorbed in God!

III. Baptism gives a Christian the beginning of sanctity. By the forgiveness of sin it purifies him from all stain, and by the infusion of sanctifying grace, it firmly unites him to God: *agios, sanctus.* Then he has the other sacraments to preserve his sanctity, to increase it, and even to get it back for him if the calamity of mortal sin should come to sully his soul and sever his union with God. Finally, with the aid of actual grace, and by the practise of the virtues, the faithful soul rises to an ever increasing sanctity, in which its purity becomes ever more stainless, and its adherence to God ever closer and more complete.

But in the religious profession the ordinary means of becoming holy are reinforced with altogether special and very powerful resources. For attaining the first requisite of sanctity, the religious has his three vows, which are so effective to detach him from the things of earth and to keep him aloof from all entanglements. The second requisite, he gets in the first place from these same vows, since they bind him closely to God, and also from the holy rules, which by protecting him in every detail of conduct from the danger of sin, constantly augment and strengthen his union with God.

Yet, however high it may be, sanctity never attains absolute perfection here below. On the one hand, the soul inhabits a house of clay: "the corruptible body is a load upon the soul," says the Wise Man;[1] and since it is unavoidably in contact with the earth, the necessary use of creatures cannot fail to bring it some

[1]Wisd. 9, *15.*

degree of defilement, according to that other saying of the Sage, "for a just man shall fall seven times."[1]

On the other hand, the soul's adherence to God is never safe from the danger of being broken. On God's part, it is true, this union defies the assaults of all enemies; but on man's side, alas, what a fragile bond it is, since a mere act of the will is enough to sever it! Hence the need for the just man to distrust himself entirely and to rely on nothing but the divine power in all things. Sanctity in this world demands constant vigilance and care on the part of the soul. It demands unceasing labor to repair, to renew, to augment it; and the saint on earth can never say, I have done enough. God warns him through His Prophet: "I have set thee this day . . to root up, and to pull down . . . and to build, and to plant."[2] These inspired words apply to no one with greater truth, or more unremittingly and universally, than they do to those who are in the holy state of religion.

Only in heaven shall sanctity attain that perfect consummation which consists in absolute exemption from all blemish, and in a union, unwavering and imperishable, with the God of infinite holiness.

ARTICLE III

VALIDITY, OBLIGATION, AND CESSATION OF A VOW

Several important points have already been briefly explained in the *Catechism of the Vows*;[3] a few further remarks may here be added.

I. A religious cannot bind himself by perpetual vows when the rule which he has embraced prescribes only temporary ones; at least the community would be in

[1] Prov. 24, *16.*
[2] Jer. 1, *10.*
[3] Part I, Chap. I.

no way bound to him by such vows. Conversely, he may not bind himself temporarily if the rule prescribes perpetual vows. Lastly, he cannot by vow embrace a form of poverty, or chastity, or obedience, which is at variance with that laid down in the constitutions of the order into which he has been received. But, if in making a vow of chastity, he intended to vow perpetual and *absolute* chastity, or if he had already done this beforehand, in that case he would remain bound, even though his superiors should loose him from the vow to which they meant to admit him according to their rule. So that, in such a case, he would need to have recourse to the authority of the Supreme Pontiff in order to be dispensed from his vow.

II. In a matter that is grave neither of itself, (as, for example, the observance of rules concerning details, or some little devotional practise), nor by reason of its attendant circumstances, one cannot bind one's self under pain of mortal sin. God, who is infinitely wise, would not accept a promise in which there was such a want of proportion between the matter and the obligation.

A religious may bind himself by vow[1] to observe one or more of his rules. Some fervent souls have given us this example; but they teach us at the same time how delicate a discretion is required in this matter; that we should carefully test such a desire to learn whether it come from God; that we should definitely limit the subject-matter of the vow, determine its exact meaning, and do nothing without the wise direction of spiritual guides.[2] A temporary vow of this nature,

[1] Evidently this would in no way come under any of the three vows of religion; it would be a *private* vow, aside from them.

[2] On this subject see the vow made by a holy religious, Venerable Father de la Colombière, to observe all the rules of his institute. Journal of his long retreat.

afterward to be renewed at intervals, would ordinarily be more prudent, and might more readily be allowed than a perpetual vow.

One cannot make a vow to avoid all venial sins, because this is a thing which is morally impossible, and the vow would consequently be void. But a vow to avoid such or such venial sins, or even all venial sins which are fully deliberate, is allowed.[1]

III. A vow may cease to exist in four ways, principally :[2] by impossibility, annulment, dispensation, and commutation.

1. *Impossibility.* Are there cases in which the vows of religion come to an end for this reason? There are none in which the impossibility is such as to dissolve the vows themselves. As to their actual fulfilment, their practise, that is another matter. For instance, some interference by a higher power, such as the expulsion or dispersion of the community, leaves unimpaired the validity of the vow by which individuals are bound, although it be temporarily impossible for them to live up to all its requirements. Again, in the matter of poverty and obedience, either

[1] How can we justify the vow "of the more perfect," which was made by Saint Teresa and by other souls after her example? Or that vow, very like it, to observe all the rules of religion? Such vows are *positive,* and concern the whole tenor of life; unavoidable peccadillos do not destroy the substance of their matter. The vow never to commit a venial sin is *negative,* and the slightest sin is in direct opposition to it. (I have borrowed this explanation of a difficult matter from A. Vermeersch and J. Creusen, Epitome Juris Canonici, 1922, Vol. II, n. 638.)

[2] Principally, because canon 1311 mentions a few other ways: lapse of the prescribed time, failure of the condition under which, or of the purpose for which it was taken, or a substantial change in the subject-matter of the vow. This last case would occur if a religious institute were radically transformed so as to change, for example, from an active to a contemplative order, or vice versa. In that case, the members would, by that very fact, be loosed from their vows.

strict impossibility or very great inconvenience in having recourse to the superior justifies a religious in presuming permissions in proper cases.

A vow to enter religion, if general, expires after several unsuccessful attempts; if it specifies a particular order, it ends when the person fails of acceptance into that order.

2. *Annulment.* The power of annulling a vow differs from that of dispensing from it. The former pertains to the right of dominion, the latter to the right of jurisdiction. Jurisdiction, in the Church, belongs only to those of her ministers on whom she confers it. A woman, though she be superior-general or abbess, is incapable of jurisdiction, and therefore cannot dispense from vows; but she can annul certain vows by virtue of her right of dominion.

Let us quote canon 1312, §1:—"Whoever lawfully exercises the right of dominion over the will of a person who has made a vow, may validly, and, for a reasonable cause also licitly, annul the vow, so that the obligation ceases, never to revive."[1] Thus parents can annul the vows of their minor children, and probably the husband, those of his wife. Since the vow of obedience gives to religious superiors, (men or women) a right of dominion over the wills of their subjects, they can nullify all their vows except the vows of religion themselves, which enjoy the special protection of the Church. All private vows (such as, to give alms, to pray, do penance, make a pilgrimage, etc.) are necessarily made subject to the condition, implied though not expressed, "if my superior does not object."

In canon 1312, §2, and canon 1315, there is no

[1] *Translator's note*—In translating the canons themselves, I have made free use of the excellent English versions which are found in A Commentary on the New Code of Canon Law, by the Rev. P. Charles Augustine, O.S.B., D.D., published by B. Herder Book Co.

longer question of annulment properly so called; the vows are only *suspended.* Canon 1312, §2: "Those who have power over the *object* of the vow, but not over the will of the person who has made the vow, may *suspend* the obligation accruing from the vow, if its fulfilment would be prejudicial to them." Acting under this authority, masters of novices may suspend vows which interfere with the order of the novitiate.

Canon 1315: "Vows pronounced before religious profession are suspended as long as the person who made the vow remains in the religious institute which he has joined." This principle applies uniformly to all professions, even of perpetual or solemn vows. If the person leaves religion, he falls once more under the obligation of his former vows (unless, of course, his superiors have annulled them, as they may do under the provisions of canon 1312, §1).

But, in case of dismissal what happens to the vows of religion themselves?

A religious who is dismissed after his *temporary* profession, in accordance with canon 647, is by that very fact loosed from his vows of religion. This is not strictly speaking an annulment. Rather, his vows were subject to a condition tacitly included in his intention when he made them, and provided for in a general way by the Code. This condition might be formulated in these words, "I agree to observe these vows for three years, unless I should be dismissed before that time expires."

If a religious, by misconduct, forces his superiors to loose him from his vows by dismissal, besides the other sins of which he is guilty, he generally commits a very serious one in particular against the charity which he owes to himself.

In fact, it frequently happens that such a person is not only rejecting the special graces of the religious

life, and turning his back on the high perfection to which God called him, but also jeopardizing his very salvation. After having so sadly abused extraordinary helps, will he now by the aid of ordinary graces easily overcome the dangers of the world? Still, as long as life lasts, there is never reason for despair. Far from crushing like a bruised reed the poor unfortunate whom they are obliged to send away, superiors will show him charity, give him encouragement, and help him, if they can, to live a Christian life.

3. *Dispensation.* The Sovereign Pontiff has received from God the power to dispense, for reasonable cause, from all vows; and this power he gives to others. Canon 1313: "Vows that are not reserved may be dispensed from, for a just reason, provided the dispensation does not trench on the rights acquired by a third person. Such dispensation may be granted:

"1. By the local Ordinary to his own subjects as well as to those of other jurisdictions who may be within his territory;

"2. By religious superiors of exempt clerical institutes, to all those persons that are mentioned in canon 514, §1; (those, that is, who live under the same roof);

"3. By those to whom the power of dispensing has been granted by the Apostolic See." This includes many regular confessors (in the sense of canon 488, 7°) by virtue of their privileges.

The two restrictions are to be noticed. The persons mentioned in canon 1313 cannot dispense: first, from reserved vows (unless these persons enjoy a special privilege allowing them to dispense also from these, which is, however, rare); nor, secondly, from vows which have conferred a strict right on some third party.

"The only private vows which are *reserved to the*

Apostolic See are those of perfect and perpetual chastity, and of entering a religious order with solemn vows; and these are so reserved only provided they are made *unconditionally* and after the eighteenth year of age has been completed." (Canon 1309). A vow made by a woman to enter religion, is never reserved in France or in Belgium, because in those countries even monastic nuns have now no solemn vows. (Canon 488, 7°).[1]

A religious society *acquires* by virtue of the religious profession, *certain rights* over its members. *The vows of religion are therefore, not among those which may be dispensed from under the provisions of canon 1313.* But the indult of perpetual *secularization* includes such a dispensation. (Canon 640, 2°). This indult is granted to members of diocesan congregations by the Ordinary of the place, and to members of other institutes by the Holy See alone. (Canon 638).

A dispensation from a vow is granted in God's name; and it is ratified by Him only if there be a sufficient cause for it, that is, a cause proportionate to the importance of the vow. Some examples of sufficient reasons are the following: very special difficulties, habitual scruples, great danger of breaking the vow and even of giving scandal, etc. If the sufficiency of the reason be doubtful, the dispensation is valid. But a religious should think very carefully before applying for an indult of secularization. An experienced director, if he be consulted in the matter, will almost always unmask a temptation of the devil in this thought of inconstancy. Secularization should be an extraordinary case.

4. *Commutation of Vows.* "Any good work prom-

[1] *Translator's note*—The same is true of all religious orders and congregations of women in the United States, with the exception of a few monasteries of the Visitation Order.

ised in a non-reserved vow may be changed by the person who made the vow, to another work that is better or equally good; but it can be changed to a lesser work, only by those persons who have power to dispense under canon 1313." (Canon 1314). The vows of religion can never be commuted by the person who pronounced them. The reasons are: first, because these vows are more perfect than any other; and secondly, because they have vested certain rights in the religious societies concerned; and in the Church, rights once vested may be impaired only when a paramount right requires it, and then only by the Supreme Pontiff himself. Formerly there was a general provision allowing a religious to remove from one religious order to a "stricter" one. (This was no injustice to the first order, since it must be taken to have consented once for all to this possible contingency.) Since the Code, no transfer can be made from one order or congregation to another, without authorization from the Apostolic See. (Canon 632).

Chapter Two

The Excellence of the Religious Vows, and the State of Perfection

ARTICLE I

EXCELLENCE OF THESE VOWS

Section 1—The Vows of Religion Compared with Other Vows

There is no occasion here to treat at length of the various kinds of vows; we shall give only the more important definitions.

A *personal* vow is distinguished from a *real* one; an *absolute* vow from a *conditional* one; a *perpetual* vow from one that is *temporary*.

A personal vow promises some *action* of the person making the vow, for example, a pilgrimage; and it is binding on that person alone.

A real [1] vow attaches the obligation directly to the *thing* promised to God, for instance, a gift, an alms; and its fulfilment may devolve upon the heirs of the person who made it, and may become an obligation binding upon them.

A vow is absolute when it makes a promise without any conditions; if on the other hand its execution is made to depend on some condition, the vow is a con-

[1] From the Latin, *res*, thing.

ditional one. A conditional vow is binding only in case the condition is fulfilled.[1]

A vow is perpetual if the promise is for life; it is temporary if the promise is limited to a time.

Let us concentrate our attention on the vows of religion.

Do not confuse the vow of entering religion with the *vows of religion,* by which one promises to God poverty, and obedience, in the religious state.

The vows of religion contain the most perfect homage, the most pleasing to God, and consequently the most meritorious, with the exception of martyrdom, that man can offer to the divine Majesty in this world. It is to the Lord like a bouquet of the most delicate fragrance and of surpassing loveliness. This bouquet is made up of three flowers which are essential to it and inseparable from it. It is peculiar to the religious state, in which also are found abundant means of securing it from damage, of preserving its freshness, of daily enhancing its beauty, and of embellishing it still by all the accessory glories of which it is capable.

The three vows of religion constitute an undertaking of that which is loftiest in the teaching of Jesus Christ, the practise of the *evangelical counsels.*

Section 2—The Evangelical Counsels

I. What, in general, are the evangelical counsels? To understand the matter better, let us recall that there are on earth two degrees of sanctity. The first,

[1] The vows mentioned in canon 1309 are reserved only if they are absolute, i.e., made without any condition, to be binding in any hypothesis and under all circumstances. The vow of chastity, even of perpetual chastity, pronounced in religion, is not reserved unless a special intention makes it so. For otherwise it is regarded as having been made subject to this implied condition: "unless I legitimately leave the state of religion."

reduced to its essentials, consists in not separating one's self from God by mortal sin; the second rises to a higher degree of purity and of union with Him. To attain these two grades of sanctity, there are two corresponding classes of means: first, those which God rigorously exacts; secondly, those which pertain only to His good will and pleasure. Thus, besides those of our actions which are obligatory, there are a host of others which, though there is no law enjoining them, are pleasing to God; and even in prescribed actions, there is still room to add to what is absolutely required, a greater or less degree of perfection, of purity, and of care, either in the intention with which they are done or in the manner of their performance. Our Lord in His Gospel invites us to this higher perfection, as does also the Holy Ghost by the good inspirations which He interiorly suggests to us; and these invitations are what are called the *counsels,* as distinguished from whatever is included under the name of *precepts.*

II. We distinguish two kinds of evangelical counsels: those which are concerned with a special subject-matter and particular acts; and those whose object is general, and, so to say, universal.

Our Lord is giving particular counsels when He tells us to bless those that curse us, to do good to our enemies even in cases where the precept of charity imposes no obligation, to turn the other cheek, etc. In every virtue, and even in every commandment of God, may be found such particular counsels, invitations to go *beyond our duty,* in regard either to the circumstances under which we act, or to the greater or less perfection of our intention, or to the number of our repetitions of the same act, or to the degree of fervor with which we perform our actions. Again, it is a particular counsel to bind one's self by vow to do any good work, whether already obligatory or not. If the act

was not already enjoined, we are assuming an obligation which God did not impose; if it was, we are adding another obligation to the one that already existed, and thus, in order to be more pleasing to God, we are doubling the bonds that bind us to Him.

The counsels whose subject-matter is general, and, so to speak, universal, are precisely the three relating to poverty, chastity, and obedience, which Christ gives us in the Gospel. The fulfilment of these counsels so colors the whole of a life as to make it a life of a very special kind.

The particular counsels, says Suarez,[1] ordinarily cover the same matter as the precepts; it is by reason of their special circumstances that they have the force of counsels only. For example, to do good to those that persecute us is, in some cases, a commandment, in others, only a counsel; whereas the three general counsels are in a sphere entirely apart from the precepts.[2] Saint Thomas explains[3] that the first class have to do with virtue already acquired, and their observance flows from a superabundant charity; whereas the second class, which are general means for acquiring perfection, provide instruments which are adaptable to all the virtues, and especially to charity. And these latter our Lord Jesus Christ has chosen in order to set them up as bulwarks against the three concupiscences which are the great enemies of perfection. For this reason they are most appropriately called the evangelical counsels.

III. But cannot a person vow to God, poverty, chastity, and obedience without being a religious?

[1] De Religione, Lib. I, c. 8.

[2] This is entirely true only of poverty and obedience. The vow of chastity goes beyond the precept in that it forbids marriage, but for the rest it merely doubles the obligation of the sixth and ninth commandments of the Decalogue.

[3] 2^a 2^{ae}, q. 186, a. 2.

1. The observance of the three evangelical counsels can be but partial outside the religious state; it will not be of that universal character which embraces all the acts of life. In the midst of the world, neither poverty nor obedience can be practised, and consequently neither can the vows be made, in an absolute manner. Owing to the exigencies of life, the practise of these virtues in the world will still be nothing more than a particular practise of the evangelical counsels. To have them in their perfect form, and to secure their full execution, one must do what our Lord Himself said: If thou wilt be perfect, go, that is to say, quit the world; sell what thou hast, that is, strip thyself of all property, and come into a place and state where, without ever possessing anything, without ever ceasing to be thoroughly poor, thou wilt nevertheless always have all that is necessary, thanks to My watchful providence. There too it will be much easier for thee to follow Me in perfect chastity. But especially wilt thou have the means of becoming, like Myself, obedient unto death, and of consecrating to Me thy whole life by the most entire subjection of thy will.[1]

2. One can without being a religious devote one's self in a more or less limited measure to the practise of the three evangelical counsels. To this God sometimes calls certain souls whom He does not call to the religious life. But in such cases there is need of keen discernment and much care to learn definitely His holy will, and of great discretion in order to decide upon the outline of one's plan of life. In these delicate decisions a director who is enlightened in the ways of God is almost always indispensable.

God has raised up in His Church, even outside the religious state, some admirable examples of evangelical

[1] "If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor . . . , and come, follow Me." Matt. 19, *21*.

poverty, consecrated in some cases by a special vow, in others sustained by an ardent charity without any formal promise. Who has not heard of Saint Alexis, and of that Saint Benedict-Joseph Labrè, whose heroic mendicancy has been canonized by the Sovereign Pontiff?

The vow of chastity may be taken outside the religious state, as is proved by the constant practise of the Church; and some persons of the world are called to it by God. However, this vow, if perpetual, should never be taken outside of religion except with the greatest circumspection, and after having maturely considered all present circumstances and future contingencies. A temporary vow in this matter may be more readily permitted; in fact, there is no reason why such a consolation, source of merit, and means of grace should be refused to a person of good will who seems to be led to its choice by the promptings of grace. All objection will be removed if one undertake the obligation for only a short time, and consider at its expiration whether it be advisable to renew it.

Finally, according to Suarez,[1] one can without being a religious, vow obedience to another person, for example to one's confessor, either on condition that he accept it, or even without such acceptance being made a necessary condition. It will, however, be very advisable that he to whom one has vowed obedience be informed of the fact, that he may be the more careful in giving orders. Of course, a person cannot in virtue of such a vow be obliged to change his actual state of life, for example to marry, or to become a religious. In other words, this vow of obedience leaves its author within the bounds of his present condition of life, and no one can impose upon him any obligation that would conflict with his ordinary duties. With the same limi-

[1] De Religione, Lib. X, c. 3.

tations, even a prelate or a religious may vow to God this sort of obedience to the will of another person. Saint Teresa did so in regard to her confessors.

Section 3—Religious Profession Compared with Baptism

"Religious profession is a second baptism"; this is the expression used by the holy Doctors of the Church. The reason they give is that it produces three effects similar to those of baptism: it wipes away sins; it causes the old man to perish in us; and it imparts a new life to the soul.

I. Religious profession remits all sins, as baptism does;[1] this is the common teaching of the theologians, following Saint Thomas and Saint Antoninus. There is on that occasion such a complete remission of all the temporal punishment due to sin, that if a religious were to die immediately after pronouncing his vows, he would go straight to heaven without passing through purgatory. The Angel of the Schools remarks[2] that this remission is not gratuitous, as it is in baptism; here, it is the fruit of the highest act of satisfaction

[1] This analogy between religious profession and baptism must not be understood in an exaggerated sense. Profession remits only the *penalty* due to sins whose *guilt* has been already forgiven, either by confession (which is necessary for mortal sins), or, in case of venial sins, by contrition. (Imperfect contrition probably is sufficient for this). If a slight fault has not been forgiven by repentance, profession does not do away with the penalty due to it. But it is hard to imagine a religious offering himself as a holocaust without having a great love of God, which contains at least implicitly the detestation of his slightest failings. Saint Thomas and most of the other theologians who have followed him have in mind only the profession of perpetual vows. Temporary profession, it would seem, should have the same effect if it is made with intense fervor and the desire of consecrating one's whole life to God.

[2] In 4 sent., Dist. 4, q. 3, a. 3.

for sin that it is in man's power to offer to God, since in that moment he sacrifices to God everything, including himself.[1]

According to Saint Anselm a deceased religious once appeared to his brethren and related to them the combat he had had to sustain against the devil at the hour of death. It had seemed to him, he said, that he was already hailed before the judgment-seat of God. The enemy of his salvation was there as his accuser; but there came also an advocate from heaven to defend him. Satan having charged him with faults committed before his baptism (which he had received only in adult life), he replied that these sins had been washed away by the waters of the sacrament; and this contention was sustained by the heavenly defender of his cause. Whereupon the enemy fell back on other sins, committed after baptism. The religious thought to silence him by repeating what he had been told, that nothing remained of those sins since the days of his vows; and again the defender corroborated it by a proof which admitted of no rejoinder. At last the devil confronted him with the faults he had caused him to commit during the course of his religious life. The dying man replied,—sustained to the end by his heavenly advocate—that these faults had been expunged by his careful confessions and by his good works done in religion. Saint Athanasius chronicles a very similar incident in the Life of Saint Anthony.

II. Religious profession, like baptism, puts to death the old man in us.

1. The religious, by his vows, dies to the world and

[1] It seems that the fervent renovation of vows should participate proportionately in this merit of their first emission; and that every one may hope for this result, measured by the fervor of the dispositions with which he renews his vows. (*Note of Father Cotel.*)

to all that is of the world.[1] The three-fold renouncement of Satan, of his pomps, and of his works, is far more energetic and thorough-going in the pronouncing of the vows than in the making of the baptismal pledges; and the three concupiscences which are the mainstay of the old man in us, receive on this occasion a far more vigorous blow.

2. By the taking of his vows, the religious ceases to be what he formerly was in the eyes of men; so much so that in olden times the law declared him civilly dead. From the day of his vows he is no longer of the world; the world knows him no more; and were he to return to it, he would be looked upon and treated as a stranger or a ghost.

3. But it is God most of all who wipes out the record of the past. To Him the religious, no less than the person newly baptized, is buried in the tomb with Christ; and, seeing him in that state like His own well-beloved Son, He finds in him now nothing of that which formerly was offensive to Him. There remains, it is true, some concupiscence, but it is left him for combat and to give him the merit of victory.[2]

III. The profession of the vows initiates the religious into a *new* life, as the Apostle says also of holy

[1] The *world* is here taken in the bad sense; it is the world condemned by Christ, the embodiment of all those tendencies that are contrary to the spirit of the Gospel. A few lines farther on in the text, the author uses the same word in another sense, to signify all men outside the religious state, *people in the world*, including those who may be not at all *worldly*, or who may even be great saints. The religious, more or less strictly cloistered as he is, lives in more or less complete seclusion from the people of the world. This material sequestration, while it has its advantages, is still not the most important thing. What is especially necessary is that even in his dealings with seculars, the religious, instead of allowing himself to be affected by the worldly spirit, become a center of energy radiating the sublime principles of the Gospel.

[2] "God finds nothing hateful in those who are born again, for *there is now no condemnation to them that are truly buried*

baptism.[1] After having too often been, by his life in the world like the first Adam, and like him earthly, the religious on the day of his vows takes on the likeness of the second Adam. After His example and by His grace, he is as it were transformed into a heavenly man.[2] Then everything in him becomes new; he has new thoughts, new sentiments, new appreciations and tendencies, new tastes and enjoyments, new works and a new manner of doing them. Once more we may apply to him what the Council of Trent says of one newly baptized: "He walks now no longer according to the flesh, but having put off the old man, he has been made innocent, immaculate, pure, without blemish, and dear to God in every detail of his new life."[3]

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together with Christ by baptism into death. (Rom. 6, *4.*) But this holy Synod professes and holds that the tinder of concupiscence remains in the baptized. Since, however, it is left them for a struggle, it can do no harm to such as, instead of consenting to it, fight against it with the grace of Jesus Christ. Nay more, he that strives lawfully shall be crowned." "In renatis nihil odit Deus; quia nihil damnationis est iis qui vere consepulti sunt cum Christò per baptisma in mortem. Manere autem concupiscentiam vel fomitem, haec sancta Synodus fatetur et sentit, quae cum ad agonem relicta sit, nocere non consentientibus, sed viriliter per Christi Jesu gratiam repugnantibus non valet; quinimo qui legitime certaverit coronabitur. Conc. Trid., Sess. V, De Peccato Orig., 5. Denzinger-Bannwart, n. 792.

[1] "That as Christ is risen from the dead, . . . so we also may walk in the newness of life." Rom. 6, *4.*

[2] "The first man was of the earth, earthly; the second man, from heaven, heavenly. Such as is the earthly, such also are the earthly; and such as is the heavenly, such also are they that are heavenly." I Cor. 15, *47, 48.*

[3] "Qui non secundum carnem ambulant, sed veterem hominem exuentes, . . . innocentes, immaculati, puri, innoxii, ac Deo dilecti effecti sunt." Conc. Trid. ibid.

Generally the transformation is not instantaneous. In order to set up in place of the old man (i.e., in place of our evil inclinations), the new man, the entirely supernatural man, stiff combats during the novice-ship have been required; and others still will be needed after the pronouncing of the vows, perhaps even during the whole of life.

A passage from Saint Bernard will sum up for us all the thoughts we have been considering: "Would you learn from me why, among all the means of doing penance, the religious profession has merited the title of a second baptism? It is by reason of its entire renunciation of the world, and because the outstanding excellence of the spiritual state raises it above every other mode of life on earth. It makes its votaries like unto angels; nay, it even restores in them the image of God, and like baptism, it makes them over after the pattern of Christ. Moreover, just as in baptism we are snatched from the powers of darkness and transported into the realm of light eternal, so, through the second regeneration which is effected by this most blessed change of life, we pass out from under the shadow, not of one original sin, but of many actual sins, into the sunlight of a virtuous life; we make applicable to ourselves those words of the Apostle: (Rom. 13, *12*) 'The night is passed and the day is at hand.'" [1]

Section 4—Religious Profession Compared with Martyrdom

I. Saint Jerome, speaking of devotion to God in religion, says in his epitaph of Saint Paula: "Martyrdom must not be reckoned as consisting alone in the shedding of one's blood; that faultless service rendered by a soul that is consecrated to God is a daily martyrdom. And whereas the former crown is woven of roses and violets, the latter is of lilies." And truly, if martyrdom of blood is the highest act of charity, the sacrifice of religious consecration involves so great a number of acts of charity that they may equal, sometimes even surpass in merit, the shedding of one's blood.

[1] St. Bern., De Praecepto et Disciplina.

Martyrdom of blood lasts but a short time; one supreme effort is enough to secure the prize. The martyrdom of religious life is usually much longer; and thus it makes up in duration what it lacks in intensity and violence. There one must die anew each day, to use the expression of Saint Paul;[1] that is, one must by mortification rain blows without end on corrupt nature.[2] According to its etymology, mortification means the production of death.

Martyr means witness; and what sublime testimony one bears by religious profession! How it is at once a glory to God, and a blessing for men! A glory to God, for it proclaims at every instant His right to all our service; and a blessing to men: to our brethren in religion, by giving them the daily encouragement of good example; and to people in the world, by giving them an eloquent instruction in the doctrine of Christ. Nay more, how often has not the virtue of religion, once recognized and appreciated, brought about the conversion even of the impious!

II. Religious profession means not one form of martyrdom only; it includes several.

1. There is the martyrdom of voluntary poverty. Let us hear Saint Bernard on this subject. "Why is it," says he, "that in the Sermon on the Mount, the same reward is promised to the poor and to martyrs, unless it be for the reason that voluntary poverty is a kind of martyrdom?" He goes on to describe, with admirable insight and force, the martyrdom of religious poverty. We once possessed temporal goods, and had the assurance of the benefits they could obtain for us; by renouncing them we have put ourselves in present want, and in uncertainty for the future. We had at

[1] "I die daily." I Cor. 15, *31*.

[2] "For Thy sake we are put to death all the day long." Rom. 8, *36*.

least the power of acquiring some property, now we have given up the right even to accept what may be offered us. In vain may the devil try to arouse cupidity; we have turned our backs on the hope of gain, and we can laugh at his overtures. Deep down in the human heart, there is always that subtle yet tenacious love of ease, that propensity to conjure up imaginary wants, that craving for the little comforts of life. Here the religious overcomes himself constantly; every day for the love of God, he smothers these daily longings. What crowns are here! What titles to the plenteous blessings and joys of paradise![1]

2. Religious chastity is a martyrdom even more glorious and meritorious. Man's life is a warfare upon earth, says the Holy Spirit. And what is the principal object of this unceasing warfare, if it be not sensuality? That is an internal, civil war; one in which the enemy is always within our lines, always under arms, and never completely downed. Even when one has generously avoided all external occasions and the seductions from without, there is still the flesh, ever lusting against the spirit. How nobly a perfectly chaste soul bears witness to God, by keeping safe the treasure which it has in a fragile vessel! "Alas," says Saint Isidore, "it is by the vice of impurity more than by any other that the devil brings the human race under his dominion"; and Saint Augustine observes that "the hardest of all the combats which the Christian has to sustain are those of chastity; combats in which the battle is on daily, and victory is rare." And yet how many pure souls there are in religious houses! What vigi-

[1] "Paupertate premi inter divitias quas affert mundus, quas ostentat diabolus, quas desiderat noster iste appetitus: an non merito coronabitur qui sic certaverit, mundum abjiciens promittentem, irridens inimicum tentantem, et quod gloriosius est, de seipso triumphans, et crucifigens concupiscentiam prurientem?" St. Bern., Serm. 1 omnium sanct.

lance to repel the slightest assault! What fidelity in keeping themselves free from the least stain! In a word, what a tribute of glory paid to the grace of God, which triumphs in infirmity!

3. Obedience, the third martyrdom of the religious life, is the most meritorious of all, since it immolates the best and dearest possession of man, his free will. It is also the most extensive and continuous, because it embraces all the actions of the religious, his entire life.

III. Finally the martyrdom of religious life is like *crucifixion.* Religious are, like Jesus Christ, *men crucified.* In the novitiate they are measured for their future cross; and then comes the time for them to be stretched upon it, the day of their vows, when they are fixed to it by three nails. Then they can say with the Apostle, "our old man is crucified," [1] by the nails of the three vows. Let us see how ascetical writers explain the effects of this spiritual crucifixion.

In the first place, a nail when it is driven begins by pushing aside whatever it encounters. This is what the nails of the holy vows do in the soul of the religious; they push aside the unruly affections, and so, to use the expression of Saint Paul, they destroy in him the body of sin.

Then, nails pierce and tear the flesh of the crucified, and as a result of the violent suspension of the whole body upon three agonized points, life becomes nothing but one continuous and all-embracing torture. After a fashion, the same thing occurs in the religious life; for always the three nails of the vows are there to make their presence felt. The religious, like the crucified, is, in the words of Saint Paul, like one who is living and dying at the same time.[2]

[1] Rom. 6, *6.*
[2] "As dying and behold we live." II Cor. 6, *9.*

The third effect of the nails is to fix the sufferer so securely to his cross that there is no possibility of his detaching himself from it, especially if the nails have been clinched. Is not this very thing also the effect of religious vows, especially of perpetual and solemn ones? It is then no longer possible to part from the cross, except by resorting to the horrible tearing away which is apostasy.[1] Moreover, the crucified, tightly clasped as he is to the cross, has no longer freedom to make even the slightest movement; and so it is with the religious who is bound by his holy vows. Lastly the crucified is suspended between earth and heaven; and such too is the position of the religious. For his feet and his senses are indeed close to the earth, but his head and his spirit are near to heaven; by labor and trial he belongs to this world, but he is already of the other world by desire and by the certainty of his hope.

It is related in the Life of Saint Bernard that one day he met a wrong-doer who was being led in chains to the gallows by the men-at-arms of the Count of Champagne. Prompted by a divine inspiration, the holy abbot goes up to the archers and asks them to turn the culprit over to him, assuring them that he will punish him as he deserves. The soldiers are astounded at his request; and whilst he is insisting and trying to overcome their refusal, the Count himself, who had been hunting in a nearby forest, comes up. He salutes the Saint with great respect, but is astonished to hear him repeat his proposal. "What," says the prince, "my dear Father, you do not know what sort of rascal you are pleading for!" And forthwith he goes on to

[1] A religious who, after taking perpetual vows, permanently quits his religious house without due authorization, is an apostate. (Codex, c. 644, §1.) By being guilty of this crime he incurs an excommunication reserved, according to circumstances, either to the major superior or to the Ordinary of the place. (c. 2385).

give an account of the man's misdeeds; "and for all this," he adds, "the fellow assuredly deserves to hang." "I admit all this," replies the Saint with a smile, "and that is just why I personally undertake his punishment, which shall be to die, not once but many times." In short, the Saint obtains his request, the prisoner is released to him, and he brings him to Clairvaux. A conquering grace has already penetrated the man's heart; and so felicitous was the outcome of the holy abbot's charity that this malefactor, after an exemplary conversion, was found worthy to be received as one of the religious. And during more than thirty years he made good the words of Saint Bernard, daily inflicting upon himself with his own hands by rigorous austerities, the chastisement which the hands of others would have forced him to endure but once.

ARTICLE II

THE RELIGIOUS STATE, OR THE STATE OF PERFECTION

Section 1—In What Precisely Consists a State, and Particularly the Religious State [1]

I. The word *state, status,* comes from the Latin verb *stare,* to *stand;* and we properly designate by the word *state,* a definite position which a thing assumes, and in which it finds a certain stability and repose which are suited to the exigencies of its nature. We say of a man that he is standing, *stat,* when, with his feet firmly planted beneath him and his head erect, his whole body is in a suitable position of stable equilibrium and of tranquillity.

In the moral order, things which are extrinsic to man, and variable, do not constitute for him a state. A state must affect his own proper person, as for example when by reason of some permanent cause he be-

[1] 2ª 2ae, q. 183, a. 1.

comes either master of himself or dependent upon another. A state, therefore, is said to suppose a certain condition of servitude or of liberty.

An office, an employment, a dignity, are not states, because these things can be assumed and laid aside; they do not affect the condition of the person himself.

An *office* is designated by the acts that must be performed in it. The office of judge, for example, destines its incumbent to pass judgments. A state, on the other hand, means a condition inherent in a person inasmuch as by it he becomes either dependent or free. If the name state is applied to certain offices and employments, it is because of the subjection and permanence which they imply.

We take the word state in its strict sense when we speak of the state of grace and the state of sin. In the former, as Saint Paul tells us, man is freed from sin and is made a servant of justice; while in the latter, he shakes off the yoke of the law of God, only to become a slave to sin.[1]

Theologians speak of the state of *voyager* and the state of *possessor;* the former state holds man subject to the conditions of this life's pilgrimage, the latter releases him from these trammels and fixes him in the blessed enthralment of the beatific vision.

There is the state of marriage, which subjects some persons to the laws of conjugal life; and the state of continence, which forbids that same life to others by reason of a binding promise of celibacy.

II. Coming now to our subject, we have the *secular state* and the *religious state.* Considered in their relation to evangelical perfection, these two states are called respectively the *common state,* or *state of the precepts,* and the *perfect state,* or *state of the counsels.* A person in the world, though he is not in the state of

[1] Rom. 6.

perfection, not having bound himself to it, may still acquire the interior perfection which belongs to that state; may even acquire that perfection in a higher degree than this or that religious has it. But the religious has always this characteristic: he has bound himself *firmly* and *permanently* to the obligations of this state; he makes *public profession* of belonging to it; and he finds in it very effective *means* of perfection, which the person in the world does not possess.

The religious state therefore affects the person. A religious by his vows enters into a fixed condition, which is both a holy servitude and a holy liberty. It is a holy servitude because of the happy constraint he has voluntarily imposed upon himself toward God, and in regard to the practise of virtue. But it entails no loss or diminution of true liberty, as worldly people imagine; quite the contrary, as may be seen from the reflections adduced on this subject by Rodriguez.[1] Besides, this constraint is full of merit for the religious. On the other hand it is a holy liberty; an emancipation from the yoke which lies heavy on so many others; an enfranchisement from the world with its seductions, its demands, its vanities; even, to a certain extent, a shaking off of the yoke of concupiscence and of sin.

Section 2—The Peculiar Merit of the Religious State

I. The merit of the religious state is apparent from the consecration to God which it involves. By the very fact that one has attached one's self permanently to God's service, that one has chained one's self to Him, so to speak, by a holy constraint, one who is in this state does far more for the divine Master, and by the same token far more for one's self, than one could have done in the world, even supposing an equally earnest will to serve God and to become holy.

[1] Practise of Perfection, Part III, Second Treatise, Chap. 5.

In fact, to use the language of the saints, one thus gives to God, not the fruit alone, but the tree and the soil. To guarantee to another the title to property is more beyond comparison than to offer him only the returns from it.

Moreover, this tree, had it remained in the arid soil of the world, had perhaps been doomed, like so many others, to yield but little fruit, or none; whereas, transplanted as it is beside the running waters,[1] it is in conditions altogether favorable to produce abundantly. This plot of ground, the soul, left subject to unhealthy influences, or abandoned to caprice, inconstancy, and sloth, would have run great risk of bringing forth only thistles and briers; whereas now, entrusted to the divine Sower, and open to the influx of His most abundant graces, it gives fair hopes of a rich harvest.

Finally, the special merit of religious consecration is that it is the highest expression of devotion. Devotion, as we have seen, is the will to give one's self promptly and whole-heartedly to whatever belongs to the service of God. Now this readiness and thoroughness of good will are found nowhere else to the same extent as in religious profession. Let us suppose that a Christian living in the world has as strong a determination as a religious has, to do all that God demands of him; still, can this disposition endure, left as it is to itself? Will it in time of need receive support, stimulation, new life, as it would in the bosom of a religious community, among brothers accustomed to help each other in their weaknesses and shortcomings? And, even if it be equally good, equally constant, and productive of acts equally virtuous, yet their merit must necessarily be less, for they lack the peculiar merit of religious sacrifice.

II. It will be well here to examine a strange objec-

[1] Ps. 1, 3.

tion which religious sometimes hear from people in the world. "In quitting the world," say they, "you have run away from difficulties; there is a want of courage in this which cannot but make your less arduous practise of virtue also less meritorious."

We might ask those who speak thus whether it is really in order to gain greater merit that they are themselves anxious to remain in the world.

We might add that although they or others in like position may triumph over the world by remaining in the midst of its dangers, there are those, more cautious, who for their part feel above all the need of fleeing from those same dangers, and who are content to have as their first claim to merit that they have taken measures for the security of their eternal welfare.

But here is an answer from Saint Thomas, more instructive and complete.[1]

We must distinguish two kinds of difficulties in the way of virtue: one is the arduousness of the work in question; the other consists in obstacles from without.

The former kind of difficulty, springing as it does from the very excellence of a difficult task, really increases its merit.

The second kind may either diminish the perfection of virtue, or may be a mark of a higher perfection. It diminishes the perfection of virtue in one who does not love virtue sufficiently to take the trouble to rid himself of the obstacles to it. It is the mark of a more perfect virtue in one who, finding himself unexpectedly or against his will in the presence of an obstacle, remains faithful to virtue in spite of it.

The first kind of difficulty, that which augments merit, is found in the religious state in far larger measure than in any other, since in religion one strives

[1] 2^a 2^{ae}, q. 184, a. 8, ad 6^{um}.

for that which is most arduous and most perfect in Christian life. As for difficulty of the second sort, it is perfectly true that the religious tries by all means to escape from it; this is a sign of wisdom, a proof of regard for virtue, and a special ground of merit. We do not deny, however, that if certain persons are forced to remain in the presence of difficulties, and in spite of those circumstances remain faithful to the end, they may show a greater degree of virtue in doing so.

III. Let us complete our answer by citing a great principle of the same Saint Thomas, a principle which is of frequent application in the service of God. "Virtue," says he, "consists rather in goodness than in difficulty; and so the greatness of an act of virtue is to be gauged rather by its goodness than by its difficulty. It is the *good,* rather than the *difficult* which counts for merit; we must not therefore count as more meritorious whatever is more difficult, but rather what is at the same time more difficult, and better." [1] Now, goodness is a combination of three elements: the goodness of the object, that is, of the work or act that is performed, the goodness of the intention, and the charity of the person who does the act. For example, the martyrs merited greatly by suffering for Christ; but the Blessed Virgin merited more than they by her slightest actions, though these may not always have involved suffering. This practical truth contains in itself all that is needed for the direction and consolation of those souls to whom it is not given to suffer for God as much as they would desire.

IV. Let us conclude these general remarks on the merit of the religious state with another thought from the Angelic Doctor. It will be useful to such as are sometimes more keenly preoccupied by the conscious-

[1] Ibid. q. 123, a. 12; and q. 27, a. 8.

ness of their past sins and the need of doing penance for them than by the desire of perfection. Here are his words: "The religious state is instituted chiefly to lead souls to perfection by means of exercises which clear away the obstacles to perfect charity. But this removal of obstacles includes especially the removal of occasions of sin, which would destroy charity altogether. And as penance consists chiefly in attacking the sources of sin, no state is more favorable for doing penance than is the religious state. Indeed the Decretum of Gratian (Causa 33, q. 2, cap. 8) gives the case of a man who had murdered his wife, and who was advised to enter a monastery in preference to remaining in the world and undergoing the punishment prescribed by the state, for the reason that the penance of religious life is on the whole both better and less rigorous.[1]

As to the opportunities offered by the religious life for the practise of works of *satisfaction,* we need not here repeat what has already been said.[2]

Section 3—A Condition Essential to Merit in the Religious Life

Although the great act of the profession of the vows is exceedingly meritorious in the eyes of God, still religious cannot be too often reminded that this merit, if it is not to become illusory, demands one essential

[1] 2^a 2^{ae}, q. 186, a. 1, ad 4^{um}. Such examples must remain exceptional. A community of one-time assassins would be quite ungovernable, in the absence of a continuous miracle. Reformed criminals should be received as members of religious communities only if it is evident that a very special grace of God has been conferred on them, and then only provided all scandal be avoided, and the provisions of canon 542, 1° be observed. Happily, religious houses contain great numbers of innocent souls who are doing penance chiefly for the crimes of other persons.

[2] Chap. II, Art. I, Sect. 3 and 4.

condition, that is, fidelity in keeping the promises that have been made. The habit does not make the religious; nor does his personal perfection flow from the perfection of his state merely, but rather from his fulfilment of its duties. Let us hear Saint Thomas once more on this subject.[1] "Individuals," says he, "may be perfect without being in the state of perfection and others may be in the state of perfection and yet far from being perfect themselves. The perfection of a state therefore is one thing, and the perfection of a life, quite another. A person is said to be in the state of perfection, not because he actually possesses perfect charity, but because he has bound himself to those things which make for perfection. While some undertake obligations, and then fail to meet them, others actually perform good works to which they are not bound. The Gospel gives us the example of the two brothers who were sent by their father to work in his vineyard. One answered 'I will not,' but went nevertheless; the other said 'I go, Sir,' and went not." [2]

We always come back to those two words of the Psalm, *"vovete et reddite."* [3] "Yes," says the Lord to those whom He calls, "offer Me your vows of religion; there is no offering more pleasing to Me,—but on one condition, that you keep them faithfully." Nothing is so easy, nothing is so quickly over, as the pronouncing of those few words of the formula, *voveo,* etc.; but to be faithful to these promises, that is the great thing; and it is the work of a lifetime. If ever

[1] 2^a 2^{ae}, q. 184, a. 4.

[2] "A certain man had two sons, and coming to the first he said: Son, go work today in my vineyard. And he answering said: I will not. But afterward being moved with repentance he went. And coming to the other he said in like manner. And he answering said: I go, Sir, and went not." Matt. 21, *28, 30.*

[3] Ps. 55.

you come to enact the tragedy of forgetting your promises; if you neglect the obligations of your holy vows, not only will you thus destroy all their merit, but your very profession of them will become the occasion for a more severe judgment; for, says the Wise Man, "an unfaithful and foolish promise displeaseth Him . . . and it is much better not to vow, than after a vow not to perform the things promised." [1]

We sometimes hear old religious speak with a certain self-complacency of the years they have spent in religion; and this form of vanity is worse than merely laughable if the perfection of their religious life has not been proportionate to its duration.

Section 4—An Institute Must Be Approved by the Church in order to Belong to the Religious State

I. It is easy to see why every pious institute or association must be approved by the Church in order to form part of the religious state. A number of the faithful band together for the purpose of aiming at evangelical perfection in community life. But they must have some assurance that they will be directed along the right road; some guarantee of the correctness of the means which will be proposed to them to attain their end. Now no man, whoever he be, even though he be a saint, can infallibly give this assurance and guaranty. Hence it is necessary to have recourse to the Church for her approbation. She is infallible in pronouncing a decision upon a rule of morals, as well as in laying down a rule of faith.[2]

[1] Eccles. 5, *3, 4.*

[2] According to theologians, the Sovereign Pontiff is infallible when he *solemnly* approves a religious *order*. This infallibility extends only to those features of the new institute which are known to him and which he expressly approves. Cf. Suarez, De Statu Religionis, Lib. II, c. 15 and 17.

Moreover, this association wishes to become a religious body having its own form of organization, and the right to govern itself and to develop in accordance with its constitution; and in order that all this may keep its due relation to the hierarchy, the authority of the Church must intervene.

Then too, as we learn from Suarez, the approbation of a religious institute by the Church includes two elements. The first is a *doctrinal decision,* a declaration, at least implicit, that the object aimed at by the institute is a holy one, that the means to be used to attain that object are sound and good; in a word, that the manner of life prescribed is a suitable one to lead souls to that special perfection which it aims to promote. The second element is an *act of jurisdiction* by which the Church, pursuant to the aforesaid decision, erects the religious body and provides it with all that is necessary to its legal existence, its government, and its growth.

Since the General Councils of the Lateran in the year 1215, and of Lyons in the year 1274, the approbation of the Holy See is necessary, at least for a religious *order* strictly so called.[1] The Pope in approving it clothes superiors with the powers they need, and accepts through them the vows of all those who may be admitted.

II. Simple religious *congregations* must, for similar reasons, be approved by the Church, but for these the approbation of episcopal authority is sufficient. (Canon 492, §1.)

A congregation founded or approved by a bishop may not establish a house in another diocese without

[1] During the early centuries, the Church, it seems, was content with a tacit approval. An order was sufficiently sanctioned if the Church knew of its existence, understood its general character, and did not condemn it. Since the Council of the Lateran, an express approbation is required.

the consent of both the Ordinary of the place where the mother-house is, and the Ordinary of the diocese in which the new house is to be established. (Canon 495, §1.) Each house is subject to the Ordinary of the diocese in which it is (canon 492, §1), but a change in the constitutions can be made only in such matters as were not submitted to the Holy See, and in these only with the consent of all the Ordinaries who have houses of the congregation in question within their territories (canon 495, §2). No congregation can be suppressed except by the Holy See (canon 493), but a single house belonging to a diocesan congregation can be suppressed by the Ordinary of the place (canon 498).

If a congregation wishes to secure pontifical approbation, it must forward to the Sacred Congregation of Religious, a petition to the Sovereign Pontiff, signed by the superior-general and his assistants, accompanied by recommendations from the bishops in whose dioceses there are houses of the congregation; also an account of the society's present condition (members, discipline, property, and resources), approved by the bishop of the place where the mother-house is located, together with a copy of the constitutions and any accessory writings.[1]

If Rome grants the petition, the Sacred Congregation of Religious publishes the "Decretum Laudis," declaring that the institute in question is worthy of praise. As soon as this decree of praise has been obtained, the congregation ceases to be diocesan and becomes pontifical (canon 492, §2).

Later will come a tentative approbation of the institute, for example for seven years, and at last the final approbation, accompanied by a confirmation of the

[1] A. A. S. 1919, p. 239.

constitutions, which shall in the mean time have been revised.

Pontifical congregations, while they are not strictly speaking exempt, are far less dependent on the bishops than are diocesan congregations. Bishops can neither amend their constitutions nor suppress any of their houses (canon 498), nor extend the canonical visit beyond the limits prescribed by canon 512, §2, 2° or canon 618, §2, n. 2, as the case may be, nor demand an accounting except in the case of dowries (canon 550), or of gifts and legacies which are set apart for worship or for specific works (canon 535, §2 and 3).

On the other hand, the dependence of these pontifical congregations on the Holy See is the more strict. The superior-general must, at least every five years, send to the Holy See an account of the condition of his society, signed by himself and his consultors, and, if there is question of a congregation of women, signed also by the Ordinary of the place where the general and his consultors reside (canon 510).

As for *moniales* (literally, monastic nuns; that is, religious women whose institute, including solemn vows, has been approved by the Holy See, for example: Carmelites, Poor Clares, Visitandines), if they are by their constitutions under the jurisdiction of regular superiors, they are subject to the Ordinary of the diocese only in the cases specified in the law (canon 500, §2). If they are subject immediately to the Apostolic See or to the Ordinary, they depend upon the Ordinary much more strictly than do pontifical congregations, almost as completely as do diocesan congregations (canons 512, 533, 535, etc.). This is particularly true in France and in Belgium, where monastic nuns actually take only simple vows, and are under the jurisdiction of local Ordinaries,

who have, however, no right to alter their constitutions.[1]

It is the Ordinary of the place who appoints the confessors of religious women (canon 524, sq.) and those of non-exempt lay congregations (canon 529).

III. The approbation conferred by the Church upon a religious body is a matter worthy of the attentive consideration of every one of its members. There is no thought better fitted to arouse confidence in God, to foster peace of soul in the possession of one's vocation, to nourish in a religious an esteem for his holy state, and to inspire him with the spirit of obedience. Hence it is the first thing that should be called to the attention of a candidate.

Every religious should keep constantly in view this authority of the Church herself, and should respect it in very detail of his institute. This will be a high and precious exercise of the spirit of faith, for the religious thus sees the constant realization of those words of Our Saviour, "he that heareth you heareth Me." But besides, every child of the Church is bound to recognize and respect her authority in every religious institute. To show enmity or contempt for a religious institute which she has approved, is to trespass against the Church herself and to sin against religion.

Notice too with what solicitude holy Church cares for religious orders. And no wonder! For they concern the service of God in its highest and most perfect form; in them she sees that portion of the flock which is most dear to the divine Pastor, her Spouse; and the experience of the centuries has taught her that it is there that sanctity has flourished most abundantly and with the most dazzling splendor. Hence too her indefatigable zeal to maintain or restore regularity of observance, a zeal which is evidenced by so many coun-

[1] A. A. S. 1919, p. 240.

cils, so many decrees of Sovereign Pontiffs, and by the official decrees of so many holy bishops. If the Church of God, therefore, cherishes with so special an affection the religious state in its various forms, certainly whoever entertains contrary sentiments on this point is not instinct with her spirit; and the opinion of such a person, whoever he be, is of no value, thrown into the opposite side of the scale from the whole weight of the Church's authority. If there appear some flaws, or even some abuses and scandals in a religious body, the Church knows how to make allowance for human weakness confronted as it is with the high goal for which it must strive; and instead of ceasing to esteem the particular institute, or losing her love for the religious state, she seeks rather to bring it back to discipline and fervor. And it is thus that her true children should think and feel; they should never make the faults of individuals a malign pretext for hating or despising the religious state or a whole religious society.

ARTICLE III

RELIGIOUS PERFECTION

Section 1—What is Perfection?

I. We hear a great deal about perfection, the desire of attaining perfection, the necessity of becoming perfect. Too often, however, our concept of perfection remains in a hazy dreamland where the imagination indulges pure fancies which are productive only of idle sentiments, and barren of virtue.

Here are the fundamental and exact notions of perfection, according to the teaching of the Angelic Doctor. A thing is called perfect when nothing is wanting

to it: *"Perfectum est id cui nihil deest."* We must distinguish three kinds of perfection. The first consists in there being nothing wanting to the *nature* of the thing. A man is thus perfect when his soul has all its faculties, and his body all its senses and members. The second kind of perfection is the resultant of all the good *qualities* which can belong to this nature. This a man has when he possesses all the qualities of body and soul which it is naturally possible for him to possess. The third perfection lies in this, that the thing attains its *end*. In this sense a watch is perfect if it fulfils its purpose, which is to keep time accurately; and a man is perfect when he attains his last end, which is God, the sovereign Good. It is this third kind of perfection which concerns us in regard to man, because in this consists his *moral perfection*, toward which he must tend in order to be happy. It is *the perfection of his virtue* and *the perfection of his beatitude*.

A being is said to be perfect in proportion as it attains its end, because its end, once it is attained, gives it its highest perfection. Now, it is by charity that man attains to God, his last end, according to those words of Saint John:[1] "he that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him." Therefore the perfection of Christian life is measured especially by charity.

But a being may be called perfect in two ways: first, absolutely, that is with reference to its substance; and, secondly, with reference in one way or another to the accidental qualities which belong to its substance. For example, we discern in a body two very different perfections if on the one hand its substance is perfect, and on the other, its color is perfectly white.

[1] I John 4, *16*.

The first is substantial perfection, and the principal one; the second is accidental perfection, and secondary.

Christian life consists substantially in charity. We have just quoted Saint John upon this point; and he also says in another place: "He that loveth not, abideth in death." [1] The perfection of Christian life, then, considered absolutely, is measured by charity. Secondarily and by way of complement, it is measured also by the other virtues which a perfect man must possess.[2]

II. Let us dwell on the practical consequences which flow from these principles. In the first place, religious perfection is measured by charity. Now, charity is a virtue by which we love God above all things because He is the sovereign Good, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God. Charity therefore has a single motive, but a two-fold object, God, and our neighbor. Consequently, when we speak of charity and its perfection, we must be careful not to forget either of the two objects, and at the same time not to lose sight of its single aim, which is God alone.

You enter religion for the purpose of acquiring the perfection of Christian life. In embracing this state you bind yourself to tend toward this perfection, which is principally a matter of charity. You must therefore realize thoroughly your two-fold obligation, which is to aim constantly at perfection, not only in the love of God, but also in the love of your neighbor. In both respects, the exterior, and, so to speak, material practise of charity may vary according to the various institutes and the special work of each; but always religious must tend toward that which is perfect under this double aspect. In order to point out clearly the road which they must follow, we shall explain in its

[1] I John 3, *14.*
[2] 2^{a} 2^{ae}, q. 184, a. 1.

entirety and with due fulness, this grand subject of charity, whose perfection is the goal to which they are bound to direct their efforts.

On the other hand, religious perfection is measured also by the other virtues, secondarily it is true, yet necessarily, in order that nothing be wanting to it. We ought therefore to consider all the Christian virtues; but since this subject is immense, and would lead us too far from the explanation of the *Catechism of the Vows,* we must refer the devout reader to the ascetical writers who have treated the matter at length.

Section 2—First Object of Charity, the Love of God

§I. In What the Love of God Consists [1]

1. Love in general is simply complacency in good, or, to speak more clearly, it is the movement of the affections by which they attach themselves to an object which appears good. To love a thing is therefore to take pleasure in it; that is, to adhere to it because it seems good.

To love a person means also to wish him well, because in the love of friendship there is included not only attachment to the person of the friend, but also, as a necessary consequence of this, benevolence toward him as toward a second self.

Here we have two notions exactly suited to characterize the love of God, which is a love of friendship. To love God means to be attached to Him because He is good, and also to wish Him well.

2. In the general concept of the love of God, we may distinguish four shades: love, dilection, charity, and friendship.

Love, we have already described.

[1] 2^a 2^{ae}, q. 26, a. 1 and 3; q. 23, a. 1.

Dilection adds to it the notion of *choice; diligere,* made up as it is of *dis* (prefix denoting diversity), and *eligere,* to choose, means *to choose between several.* And so dilection pertains only to the rational appetite endowed with freedom of choice. The word expresses rather the *act* of love than its *habitual presence* in the soul.

The word love is, according to Saint Dennis, better suited than dilection, for denoting the love of God, because it connotes a certain passivity. And truly in loving God, man is rather borne toward Him by undergoing God's magnetic power, than by turning toward Him through reasoned choice. Quite fittingly therefore, it is by prayer, principally, that this love of God is acquired.

Charity denominates a certain perfection of love; the loved object is held *dear,* or of great price; and so the name of charity is applied to that love alone which places God above all else.[1]

Friendship expresses the habit of charity. It denotes also the mutual attachment which binds two hearts to each other with requited benevolence. Hence charity is a friendship that subsists between God and man, according to those words of Saint James: "Abraham was called the friend of God."[2] Our Lord Jesus Christ also declares to His own that they are His friends.[3]

This mutual attachment is based on God's communication to man of His beatitude, on this earth by sanctifying grace, which is the germ of that beatitude, in heaven by glory and the enjoyment of fully possessing

[1] *Translator's note—Cher,* the French word for dear, shows more clearly than the English, its relation to the Latin *carus,* and thus gives the key to the meaning of both the French *charité,* and the English, charity.

[2] James *2, 23.*

[3] "I have called you friends." John 15, *15.*

Him. Man repays God as far as he can by giving and consecrating to Him all that he has, and all that he is. It is all he has to give.

It is the privilege of friendship to live with one's friend. Hence through charity man enters into a continuing relation with God; and in this, his spiritual life here below consists. These relations of divine friendship are, however, imperfect during this period of exile; for, as Saint Paul says, "We know (only) in part." [1] The divine Friend remains hidden from us behind the veils of faith. And yet, what interchanges of love have not taken place between God and His saints! It is, says the author of the *Imitation,* an astonishing familiarity, "familiaritas stupenda nimis"; and this familiar friendship is experienced, in due proportion, by every generous and fervent soul. In our heavenly home, our relations of friendship with God shall be perfect, when "we shall see His face," and He shall be "all in all." [2]

§II. The Seat of the Love of God Is Not Man's Inferior Appetite, but His Will Alone [3]

The human soul has two faculties by which it seeks what is good, in order to take pleasure in it and adhere to it. Philosophy calls them the two appetites of our nature; they are the *inferior appetite,* and the *rational* or *superior appetite,* which is also called the *will.*

Both of these faculties, therefore, have the power of loving; but their respective acts of love differ, as do the faculties themselves. The one loves necessarily; the other, freely. Both have good as their object, but each in its own way. The object of the inferior appe-

[1] I Cor. 13, *9.*

[2] "And His servants shall serve Him, and they shall see His face." Apoc. *22, 3, 4.*
"That God may be all in all." I Cor. 15, *28.*

[3] 1^a 2^{ae}, q. *26,* a. 1.

tite is the good which is perceptible to the senses; that of the rational appetite is the good which is known by the intellect under the common concept of good.

Now, the object of charity is not sensible good, but the divine Good, that is God Himself, who can be known not by the senses, but only by the mind. As a necessary consequence, the *subject* of charity, that is the faculty in which it inheres, is not the inferior appetite, which responds to sensible impressions, but the will.

These are principles of great importance in the spiritual direction of souls, both to ease their consciences in regard to those indeliberate inclinations toward pleasure of the senses, which they experience, but to which they do not consent, and also to enlighten them as to the true nature of charity.

But, some one may say, what about those pleasurable emotions one sometimes feels in following the inclinations of piety? Those tears of devotion, and other tender experiences,—are not these the love of God?

We have already answered this question in speaking of sensible devotion.[1]

Section 3—The Perfection of the Love of God

§I. Whether It Is Possible to Man to Love God Perfectly[2]

The perfection of charity may be understood in two ways; first with reference to the object loved, and secondly with reference to the lover.

1. With reference to the object of love, charity is perfect when one loves a being to the full measure in which it is lovable. God is as lovable as He is good;

[1] Chap. I, Art. II, Sect. 3.
[2] 1ª 2ªe, q. 24, a. 8.

and since His goodness is infinite, He is infinitely lovable. No creature, however, is capable of loving Him infinitely, because all created powers are limited. Under this aspect, therefore, no creature can have perfect charity; the only perfect love is that with which God loves Himself as much as He deserves to be loved.

The soul that loves has but one recourse in her weakness, and that is to humble herself at the sight of a goodness that merits infinitely more love than she is able to give it. Yet, since God loves Himself to the full measure of His lovableness, she will rejoice at it, and will unite to this immeasurable love, the little she herself is able to command.

2. With reference to the lover, charity is perfect if he loves God as much as he can, according to the explanation about to be given.

§II. Three Kinds of Perfection in the Love of God [1]

There are three ways in which man may love God as much as he can.

The first consists in loving God so much that the heart is always entirely united to Him actually. This shall be the perfection of our love in heaven; in this life, the weakness of human nature does not allow us actually to think of God all the time, nor to be constantly borne toward Him with the impulsion of love.

It would be well to bring this fact to the attention of certain indiscreet souls who are looking for the impossible.

A second way of loving God perfectly is for man *habitually* to have his whole heart so set on God that he neither thinks nor wills anything contrary to the love of God. He excludes from his affections everything that would destroy charity in his soul; that is, all

[1] 1ª 2ªe, q. 24, a. 8; 2ª 2ªe, q. 184, a. 2.

mortal sin. This very relative perfection is a matter of precept, and it exists in all persons who are in the state of grace.[1] Venial sin is not contrary to it, because it does not destroy the habit of charity.

The third way of loving God perfectly is mid-way between the other two. Man bends all his energy to belong, as far as his intellect and will are concerned, entirely to God and supernatural good, leaving aside all else, as far as this is possible amid the weakness and necessities of this present life. This perfection of charity, therefore, detaches itself as much as is possible here below, from earthly things; for such preoccupations, though licit, still entangle the soul and prevent its actual attraction to God. This perfect charity excludes from man's affection even the slightest obstacles which would embarrass the complete orientation of his heart toward the divine Good.

It is with this third perfection of charity that the evangelical counsels have to do. They are the means of attaining it. No doubt it may be met with also in the world; generous souls living in the world should even be urged to it; but the religious has in his state the helps that are exactly suited to aid in its attainment and in making ever more advanced progress in it; moreover, his state itself imposes upon him the obligation of tending toward it.

§III. Perfection of the Love of God, in the Act

The act of charity, with regard to its perfection, may be considered in two ways: according to its nature, and according to its degree.

It is perfect in its nature when it springs purely from the motive of charity, without any admixture of any other motive. It is what is called *the act of pure*

[1] Although sanctifying grace most probably is not identical with habitual charity, still one never exists without the other.

love, by which we love God for Himself alone. This charity, although it is perfect, can still *grow in intensity* during this life, so that its acts may be of ever higher perfection.

An act of charity is imperfect in its nature, if one loves God for some other good than Himself, for example for His blessings or rewards. These inferior motives are not sufficient to give rise to an act of perfect charity; yet they may prepare our hearts for it. Dwelt upon, they lead us easily to love God for His own goodness, which they manifest to us. Even the punishments which He inflicts or threatens can dispose us for an act of charity, when we seek to escape His justice by taking refuge in the bosom of His mercy.[1]

An act of charity is perfect in degree, if, though not entirely pure in its nature, it still makes us prefer God to every other good, and thus makes us love Him practically above all else. The essential mark and proof of this charity is the observance of the commandments, at least to the extent of avoiding mortal sin, according to those words of our Lord, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." [2]

An act of charity is imperfect in degree, and is insufficient for salvation, when in practise one loves something else as much or more than God.

That charity which is perfect in its nature is called by theologians *affective summa;* that is, highest as regards affection. That which is perfect in degree is called *appreciative summa;* that is, highest as regards appreciation.

In order that an act of charity, without the sacrament, may justify a person who has fallen into mortal sin, there must be not only the desire of confession (or of baptism, as the case may be), but also a charity that

[1] 2^a 2^{ae}, q. *27,* a. 3.
[2] John 14, *15.*

is perfect, not in degree merely, but also in nature. Even so, this effect of perfect contrition is a very consoling truth. If one fall through human frailty, there is at hand, thanks to God's mercy, a ready means of regaining His friendship, even before one is able to go to confession. Nor is this act of perfect charity so difficult to make as some imagine, especially for a truly Christian soul who, by ardent prayer, begs this grace of Almighty God.

There are those who contend that the love of God is not pure unless it tend toward God considered as the sovereign good in Himself, without any relation whatever to ourselves. In this view, one who loves God as his own good, has but an *interested* love for Him, and not pure love. Those who hold this opinion fail to understand what the love of God is. Surely, since the proper object of love is good, and since our heart can adhere only to what we know is good for us, does it not evidently follow that to love God means to delight in Him and to find in Him one's own good? "What is it to love God freely?" exclaims Saint Augustine; "it is to love Him for Himself, and not for something else." [1] And Saint Alphonsus Liguori observes: "The desire to possess God is the special act which is proper to charity, and it is even the most perfect of all acts of charity, since the possession of God is the consummation of love." [2]

§IV. Explanation of the Great Commandment of Love [3]

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole

[1] "Quid est gratuitum? Ipse propter se, et non propter aliud."
[2] "Desiderium possidendi Deum est actus proprius caritatis, immo omnium perfectissimus; quia possessio Dei est caritas consummata."
[3] 2^a 2^{ae}, q. 44, a. 5.

strength." [1] "This is the greatest and the first commandment." [2]

The Angel of the Schools here exhibits admirable precision and breadth of scope in explaining the various senses of perfect charity.

The love of God is, as we have said, a motion of the will; and it is the will that is here designated by the word heart. Just as the bodily organ, the heart, is the principle of all the movements of animal life, so the will is the principle of all the movements of the soul, that is of the spiritual life,—at least in as far as the soul, by its actions, tends toward its last end, which is the will's proper object. So when we speak of the love of God, the word *heart* means the *will* and its affections; it does not include the inferior appetite nor its sensible emotions, since these are not always subject to our control.

The great precept of charity is directed first of all, therefore, to the will. Once God possesses our will, He has all; and so He says to each one of us, "My son, give Me thy heart," [3]—that is to say, thy will.

Man has, however, three other principles of action, which are under the control of his will: first, the understanding, which is expressed in Holy Scripture by the word *mind* (*mens*); secondly, the lower or sensitive appetite, denoted by the word *soul* (*anima*), for Scripture often makes use of this word to designate animal life; and thirdly, the motive force which, through the body, translates will into outward action; this last is called *strength* (*fortitudo, virtus, vires*).[4]

[1] Deut. 6, *5*.
[2] Matt. 22, *38*.
[3] Prov. 23, *26*.
[4] Deut. 6, *5*; Matt. 22, *37*; Mark 12, *30*; Luke 10, *27*. The words "with thy whole mind" do not occur in Deuteronomy, but are found in Matthew and Mark. Luke has "with all thy mind." Saint Thomas takes note of this.

By the great commandment of charity, we are commanded, first, to direct our whole intention, and every movement of our will, toward God; that is what it means *to love God with our whole heart.* This includes all our interior and deliberate affections.

Secondly, we are commanded to subject our intellect entirely to Him. That is what is meant by *loving God with our whole mind;* it is the homage we give Him by faith, and by whatever is included in our thoughts, our appreciations, our judgments.

Thirdly, we are bidden to regulate our lower appetite according to God; this it is to *love Him with our whole soul.* Such is our duty with regard to the life of our senses, our memory, and our imagination. Saint Thomas here uses the word *reguletur,* with a fitness that is noteworthy; for the will, in order to moderate in as far as it can, the inferior appetite and the passions which arise from it, must keep them curbed within the bounds prescribed by right reason.

Lastly, we must see to it that all our exterior actions be the faithful execution of the will of God. This is *to love Him with our whole strength.* It includes works done for the service of God, whether at His command or upon His invitation and counsel.

Here we have the whole matter of perfection in the fulfilment of the great precept of charity.

And yet, as Saint Thomas goes on to say,[1] this precept will be fulfilled perfectly only in heaven, at the terminal of the journey upon which we here below are traveling. To fulfil the precept perfectly is to attain the end its Author had in view when He gave it. One also fulfils it, however, though in an imperfect manner, when, without actually reaching the end intended

[1] $2^a\ 2^{ae}$, q. 44, a. 6. This text furnishes us with a reply to the Jansenists, and refutes their accusations against Catholic theologians on this subject of charity.

by the Lawgiver, one still adheres to the order which leads to that goal. When a general issues an order for an attack, those soldiers fulfil the command perfectly who fight so as to gain an actual victory, this being the end intended by the commander. But those who do battle and yet fail to attain the victory, also fulfil the command, though imperfectly, provided they act throughout in accordance with military discipline.

So it is with the observance of the great precept. In imposing it upon man on this earth, God intends him to become fully and entirely united to Himself, a result which shall be completely realized only "when," in the words of the Apostle, "all things shall be subdued unto Him, . . . that God may be all in all." [1] Still, He enjoins it not in vain on those who are still upon the way, although none of them can presently attain to its perfect fulfilment. For, as Saint Augustine says, "one runs not as he ought, if he knows not whither he should run; and how should he know this, if there were no precept to point it out?" [2]

§V. The Totality of the Love of God

Let us consider the perfection of the love of God under another aspect. Charity in order to be perfect in all respects, must include a certain *totality* or *universality;* it must extend to all that is of God and to all that belongs to God.

What a broad field is thus unfolded before us for the practise of the love of God! And who should leap forward upon this course with more eagerness than those who are in the state of perfection? In order to love God perfectly and entirely, we must therefore not

[1] I Cor. 15, *28.*

[2] "Non enim recte curritur, si quo currendum est nesciatur. Quomodo autem sciretur, si nullis praeceptis ostenderetur?" Lib. de Perfectione Justitiae.

only love Him in Himself, His essential goodness, the three Divine Persons, and each of the infinite attributes of the divine Being, but also all the operations of God in the whole universe. We must love the Incarnate God, our Lord Jesus Christ, His life, His mysteries, His name, His glory, His Mother, His saints; we must love all that His providence has done in the natural and in the supernatural order, especially in as far as it touches and concerns us; finally, we must love God in all His creatures, especially in men, who are His children, whom He calls our *neighbor,* and in relation to whom He has been pleased, with particular care, to impose upon us a second commandment which He declares to be like to the first.[1]

Section 4—The Effects of the Love of God

The effects of divine love are of two kinds: those which are produced by it within the soul, and those which manifest it outwardly in action.

§I. Interior Effects of Divine Love[2]

1. When this love is present its most immediate effect is to *produce holy affections in the soul,* just as fire naturally produces heat. We have already pointed out that these affections proceed especially from the will, which, being endowed with liberty and assisted by grace, is always able to elicit them, even in the absence of sensible affections. Their intensity cannot be gauged by comparing them with those other movements which spring from natural human love, for example from mother-love. The affections which flow from the love of God belong to an altogether different

[1] "The second is like to this." Matt. *22, 39.*
[2] 2^a 2^{ae}, qq. *28, 29.*

order, and may be genuine, or even more intense, without exhibiting the same degree of sensible vehemence.

2. *The love of God causes joy.* Joy is the outcome of love, whether the lover be engaged in enjoying the beloved one, or in seeing him happy in his own well-being.

The principal joy of charity consists in rejoicing in the divine well-being; that is, in the happiness which God Himself enjoys. This joy is incompatible with sadness, just as the good which produces it can have no admixture of evil. Hence the Apostle tells us, "Rejoice in the Lord *always*." [1] We can always rejoice in the happiness of God, whatever ills we suffer here on earth. The saints give us many examples of this.

The secondary joy of charity is that we rejoice in the divine good in as far as we participate in it. The just man, even in this life, does participate in it, for as Saint John says, "he that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him." [2] Such is the source of this joy that nothing can take it from us. Yet sadness may mar it, because of the obstacles which, in this life, hinder us or those whom we love as ourselves, from sharing in the divine Good. These obstacles are sin, spiritual infirmities, the perils of life, the postponement of the perfect possession which we hope for in heaven.

3. *The love of God produces peace.* Saint Augustine defines peace as "order in tranquillity." Now, order within us is often liable to be disturbed, either by the inclinations of the flesh warring against the spirit, or by those of our will, divided as it is between various objects which it cannot attain at the same time. Peace consists in harmonizing all these tendencies, and bringing them to rest in a state of order. This is done by subordinating them all to the single

[1] Philip. 4, *4.*
[2] I John 4, *16.*

object of charity. By loving God more than all else, charity provides the soul with a means of referring everything to Him, and of marshaling all its faculties, each in its proper place, toward a single goal.

4. *The love of God leads to union with Him;* and that in two ways. The first is according to the affections of the heart; and this union, this ligature, is love itself, whose essential act it is to attach itself to God. The second union, which results from the first, is the actual coming together of the two friends; for love causes us to seek the presence of the loved one, as a good which delights us and belongs to us. Hence, one who truly loves God leaves nothing undone to bring himself into His presence in every possible way: by prayer, by Holy Communion, by assiduous visits to Him in the Blessed Sacrament, by recollection and the practise of the presence of God, and finally, by the oft repeated desire to be perfectly united to Him as soon as possible in His Kingdom.

5. *Divine love goes so far as to produce even a mutual compenetration of God and the soul,* according to those words of the Beloved Apostle already quoted, "he that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him."[1] Saint Thomas explains this wonderful effect of charity as follows.

The mutual compenetration engages both the intellect and the will. First, God dwells in the mind of whoever loves Him, in this sense, that the thoughts of such a person are filled with God. The person in turn dwells in the divine Mind, for, not content with a superficial acquaintance with God, he penetrates to the interior, and by dint of meditation strives to attain as far as he can the thoughts of God. It is a distant and imperfect imitation of the Holy Ghost, who, because He is infinite Love, "searcheth all things, yea, the deep

[1] I John 4, *16.*

things of God."[1] Secondly, God dwells in the will of whoever loves Him, in that He occupies such a person's affections. For the person either desires to possess Him, or desires His glory, and strives to win it for Him. In turn, the human will dwells in the divine, for it shows itself inseparably united to that beloved Will through the perfect conformity of its affections, its desires, its plans, its resolutions, and all its acts.

§II. Exterior Effects of Divine Love

1. *Love produces works.*

Charity is a love of friendship, whose interior act is to wish the loved one well. It is therefore by its very nature liberal, and needs no incentive to pour itself out. As we read in the Canticle of Canticles, "if a man should give all the substance of his house for love, he shall despise it as nothing."[2] If he wishes his friend well, sincerely and heartily, will he not do him as much good as he possibly can?

Charity is a friendship between God and man; that is, it creates, not merely a mutual inclination of their hearts to each other, but a real mutual benevolence, and an ardent and deep-seated desire to share with each other the goods that each possesses. This is why there must be works on both sides, to give substance, vigor, and outward expression to this friendship.

See how the divine Friend has shown you the reality of His love. Count, if you can, its demonstrations, both in the order of nature and of grace. Even forecast dimly all that He still wishes to do for you in the order of glory. And when you shall have fully acknowledged, in mind and heart, how much your God does through friendship for you, consider also what

[1] I Cor. 2, *10*.
[2] Cantic. 8, *7*.

you, the other party to this friendship, should in justice do; for you ought to give Him all that you have and all that you are.

By what works does charity gain the greatest merit? Is it by those that are most toilsome and difficult? Saint Thomas answers [1] that a work may be difficult and burdensome in two ways: by reason of the greatness of the act, or through the fault of him who performs it. In the former case the labor enhances the merit; yet love lightens the burden without allowing the merit to be diminished. In the second case the work seems hard and toilsome because it is not done with alacrity; and thus the difficulty lessens instead of increasing the merit; yet here again, love removes or alleviates the burden. This two-fold lesson is well worth meditating; and its application is easy and manifold.

2. *Love of God produces zeal.*[2]

What is zeal? Strictly, it is the effort made by one who loves, to remove and destroy all obstacles which thwart his love.

In general, the more strongly the soul tends toward an object, the more vigorously it throws aside whatever is in its way. But in a special manner is this true of love; the stronger it grows, the more energetically it spurns everything that is contrary to itself, that is to say, everything that hinders it in the pursuit or enjoyment of its object, and everything that mars the well-being of the beloved one. If zeal is not able to get rid of the obstacle, it suffers and grieves.

The practise of zeal for souls includes that of zeal for the glory of God. For it is God's great glory to be known and loved by His rational creatures, and the great practise of charity toward the neighbor is to make

[1] 1ª 2ªe, q. 114, a. 4, ad 2um.
[2] 1ª 2ªe, q. 28, a. 4.

known to him in what his supreme welfare consists, and to help him to secure its eternal enjoyment.

Section 5—The Second Object of Charity, the Love of Our Neighbor

§I. The Motive of Charity Toward Our Neighbor [1]

1. The reason for loving our neighbor is the love which we owe to God. It follows that charity includes also the love of our neighbor. In fact, we are obliged to love in our neighbor that which is of God, that is, the gifts of nature and of grace which are from Him; we are bound to love our neighbor so that he may belong to God and dwell in God by grace in this life and by glory in the next. Evidently, therefore, the act by which we love God and our neighbor is specifically the same act of charity. Saint John teaches us this truth: "And this commandment we have from God, that he who loveth God, love also his brother." [2] A love of the neighbor without God for its motive would be useless for salvation; it would even be wrong if it were directed to the neighbor as its principal end, or in derogation from the love of God.

Such is the great principle of fraternal charity. How important it is for Christians, especially for religious, to be thoroughly imbued with this principle! And how often we need to recur to it, for self-love is forever turning our thoughts in the opposite direction!

2. On this subject, Saint Thomas puts a question which at first blush seems odd, but which calls forth an answer containing several very useful lessons.[3]

Is it more meritorious to love God than to love the neighbor?

[1] $2^a\ 2^{ae}$, q. 25, a. 1.
[2] I John 4, *21*.
[3] $2^a\ 2^{ae}$, q. 27, a. 8.

If we consider the two loves in themselves, he replies, beyond question the love of God is the more meritorious. Its reward is due to it on its own account, for the highest, the ultimate recompense shall be to enjoy the possession of God,—the very object toward which this love tends.

But if we make the comparison between a love of God which is, of set purpose, made exclusive, and a love of the neighbor explicitly for the sake of God, then the love of the neighbor includes the love of God, whereas the love of God does not include the love of the neighbor. The perfect love of God, which includes also the neighbor, is preferable to the imperfect love of God; because, to quote once more the words of the Blessed Apostle, "this commandment we have from God, that he who loveth God, love also his brother." So, in this sense, the love of the neighbor takes the first place.

From this consideration, three practical conclusions follow.

1. That person is deceived who thinks to increase his love of God, and his merit, by acting in a manner contrary to his vocation and state, and so withdrawing himself from works of charity in behalf of his neighbor, for the sake of having more leisure to devote to exercises of piety.

2. Seeing that acts of the love of our neighbor draw their merit only from the love of God, it becomes necessary, as Saint Ignatius so well points out, "to make sure, before acting, that the love one feels for the neighbor really comes from the love of God, and that God is clearly the cause for which we love him." [1]

[1] "Prima regula est, ut amor ille qui me movet, descendat desursum ex amore Dei Domini nostri, ita ut sentiam primum in me hunc esse propter Deum, et in causa reluceat Deus." Exerc. Spir., Reg. pro Eleemosynis.

3. That this love of the neighbor may remain imbued with the love of God, it is essential that it be frequently refreshed, and dipped anew, as it were, in the special exercises of the love of God, that is, in spiritual exercises.

§II. Explanation of the Second Commandment of Charity [1]

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." [2]

The very words of this commandment indicate the *reason* for the love that is due to our neighbor, and the *manner* in which we should love him.

1. The reason for loving him is contained in the word *neighbor, proximus.* We owe all men the love of charity because they are very close to us, being like ourselves natural images of God, like us friends of God,[3] and as capable as we are ourselves of that glory in which we shall one day all be transformed together in the bosom of God.

Scripture sometimes uses the word *neighbor,* sometimes the word *brother,* sometimes the word *friend,* but always to designate this same affinity.

2. The manner of loving our neighbor is expressed in the words, *as thyself.* The precept does not prescribe that we love him *to an equal degree* as ourselves, but *in a similar manner;* and this, in three respects. First, as to the *motive:* we must love our neighbor for God's sake, just as we are obliged for His sake to

[1] 2^a 2^{ae}, q. 44, a. 7.
[2] Matt. 22, *39.*
[3] It is through sanctifying grace that men are no longer merely the creatures and the servants of God, but have become truly His children. Cf. St. John, 1, *12.* It is this participation of the divine nature that we must love most of all in our neighbor; we must seek to communicate it to souls, and to increase it in them.

love ourselves; and thus our love for others will be *holy.*

Secondly, as to the *rule* which must moderate it: we are not permitted to comply with the wish of another so as to do what is wrong, but only what is right, just as we may follow our own desires only in what is right; and thus our love for our neighbor will be *just.*

Thirdly, as to its *end:* we must not love our brothers for our own interest, but desire their welfare as we do our own; and thus the love of our neighbor will be *genuine.* For, to love him for our own profit or pleasure is not really to love our neighbor, but to love ourselves.

§III. The Perfection of the Love of Our Neighbor [1]

In charity toward our neighbor, we must distinguish two kinds of perfection.

The first kind, without which there would be no charity at all, cleanses our affection from all mortal sin, which would destroy the presence of this virtue in us.

The second perfection is a far higher one. It consists of three elements: the extent of our charity, its intensity, and its effect or exercise.

1. Charity is perfect *in extent,* if we love not only those who are near and dear to us, but also strangers, foreigners, and even enemies. For, as Saint Augustine says, "this is the mark of the perfect children of God." [2]

This perfection of charity which embraces in its affection all men without exception, is a worthy object of a holy ambition on the part of religious; and be-

[1] 2^a 2^{ae}, q. 184, a. 2.
[2] "Hoc est perfectorum filiorum Dei."

cause of the difficulties which it encounters, it demands efforts proportioned to its worth. It is not the defects or the sins of others which constitute the chief difficulty; it is we ourselves who place it, by always forgetting that we must love our neighbor for God's sake, and not for such of his personal traits as may chance to please us.

2. Charity toward the neighbor is perfect *in intensity,* if one is prepared to balk at no sacrifice when it comes to proving his love. In this way, one shall not only despise temporal advantages for the good of the neighbor, but shall be prepared to undergo toil, sorrow, suffering, and even death.

3. Charity is perfect *in its effect or exercise,* if we use for the benefit of our brethren not only all the temporal goods but also all the spiritual resources at our command, and if moreover we devote and spend ourselves in their service, following the example of the great Apostle.[1]

Such is fraternal charity in all those who consecrate their lives to the good of their neighbor; this perfection belongs to a large number of religious institutes, and becomes a duty and a source of merit for every one of their members.

Section 6—Growth of Charity in Our Souls

§I. Upon Whom Does This Growth Depend?[2]

1. Charity can have God alone as its author, for it is a *supernatural* habit, whose function it is to perfect the human will, rendering it capable of producing acts of supernatural love, and of producing them with ever

[1] "But I most gladly will spend and be spent myself for your souls." II Cor. 12, *15.*

[2] 2ª 2ªe, q. 23, a. 2; q. 24, aa. 2 and 3.

greater readiness and facility. Moreover, charity in us is a participation of the infinite charity of God Himself; so that it is the part of none other than the Holy Ghost to create it and to infuse it into our hearts.[1] And so we call God the life of our soul in the supernatural order, not that He is formally so, but because it is the Holy Ghost who instils charity; and that is formally the supernatural life of the soul, just as the soul itself is the life of the body. Finally, as charity is of infinite efficacy, capable of making the sinner just, of uniting him to God, and of meriting for him eternal happiness, it is evident that an infinite power is required to produce it in our souls.

To acquire charity was therefore something entirely beyond man's power. Nor can its measure and its growth depend either on natural capacity or human power. It is the part of the Holy Ghost to increase it as well as to implant it in our souls, according to the words of Scripture, "the Spirit breatheth where He will," [2] and also, "He divideth to every one according as He will." [3]

2. It is true, however, that in order to give us either the first infusion or an increase of charity, God requires preparation and active cooperation on our part. This is the meaning of those words of our Lord, "he delivered to them his goods, . . to every one according to his proper ability." [4] But faith teaches us that this preparation and effort on our part are anticipated by the Holy Ghost, who incites our will beforehand,

[1] "The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost who is given to us." Rom. 5, *5*. If God had not elevated us to the supernatural order, we ought to have the greatest natural love for Him. In the higher plane of life to which He has raised us, no purely natural virtue is sufficient; everywhere we need the wings of grace.

[2] John *3, 8*. [3] I Cor. *12, 11*.

[4] Matt. *25, 14, 15*.

more or less, according to His good pleasure; and so it is always He who, in the words of the Apostle, "hath made us worthy to be partakers of the lot of the Saints." [1]

3. From these principles we may draw two conclusions. In the first place, to augment charity, and consequently perfection, in ourselves, just as much as when there is question of acquiring or preserving it, we must address ourselves to God through prayer. Secondly, with the help of His grace, we must also do our part by removing obstacles and cooperating with the action of the Holy Ghost. Would to God that our cooperation were always what it could be and ought to be! "There are very few souls," says Saint Ignatius, "who are thoroughly faithful in making use of the gifts which they receive; very few who reach the degree of charity and perfection to which it was God's will to raise them."

§II. In What the Growth of Charity Consists [2]

1. Charity grows in our souls in that it becomes more intense, and so stimulates the will to more fervent acts. God, in increasing charity within us, makes us participate more and more in resemblance to the Holy Ghost, who is uncreated and infinite Charity.

2. Charity can go on increasing in a soul until the end of this present life. In fact we are called *travelers* because we must continue on our way toward God, the terminal of our journey and the object of our beatitude. Now our progress in this journey is measured

[1] Coloss. 1, *12*. Needless to say, the baptism of infants falls outside all the rules indicated in this paragraph. Infants receive charity along with the other infused virtues, without any actual graces, or any special personal preparation.

[2] 2^a 2^{ae}, q. 24, aa. 4, 5, 7.

by our approach to God, not by bodily steps, but by the affections of our soul, as Saint Ignatius has said. It is charity that brings us near to God. This virtue therefore is capable of continual growth in this life; for, otherwise, it would mean that we came to a halt in our journey. For this reason, Saint Paul calls charity a way. "I show you," he says, "yet a more excellent way." [1]

Here a powerful thought presents itself. If there were any room for envy in heaven, the saints would surely envy us this advantage. Their charity is no longer capable of growth, as ours is; true, it is perfect in its degree, but it could have been of a higher degree as a result of its increase which they might have merited while on earth.

3. Charity can increase *indefinitely* during this life. It is impossible to set any limit to it, either by reason of its *form,* which is a participation of infinite charity; or by reason of its *cause,* which is God Himself whose power is without bounds; or finally, by reason of the soul, for as charity is increased in the soul there is always a correspondingly increased aptitude for still further growth. As charity becomes in this way ever more perfect, it is progressing toward an end, toward a terminal; but this shall be attained only in the future life. Hence Saint Augustine exclaims: "However long we may have lived, how far soever we may have advanced in our march, no one can say, 'This is enough for me.' Whoever says this, remains on the road and becomes incapable of finishing the journey. At that point where he said 'This is enough,' there he stopped and is standing still." [2]

[1] I Cor. 12, *31.*

[2] "Quantumcumque vixerimus, aut profecerimus, nemo dicat: Sufficit mihi: qui enim hoc dixerit, remansit in via, non novit pervenire. Ubi dixerit: Sufficit, ibi haesit."

§III. Whether Charity Increases in Us with Every Act of Charity We Produce[1]

1. The Angelic Doctor gives a negative answer, and explains it by the following comparison.

The spiritual growth of charity is analogous to the growth which takes place corporally in an animal or in a plant. In them, growth is not a continuous process; but for some time nature's action consists in disposing for growth, without actually producing it; afterward comes the moment when she brings forth the result she has been preparing for, by causing an actual increase in the animal or in the plant.

It is the same with charity. Every act of it which we produce does not always actually increase it, but it does dispose it for an increase, by making the will readier to elicit another act. As this disposition goes on growing in this way, a man comes to make more intense acts of love; through them he strives to advance in charity, and thus charity is actually augmented.

The reason why charity does not increase with every act is that an effect cannot be greater than the cause which produces it. Now, an act of charity may sometimes be torpid and remiss. Evidently, such an act, far from leading to a greater charity, rather disposes the soul for a lesser degree of it.

2. Two points are here worthy of mention. The first is that this doctrine of Saint Thomas conflicts not at all with the definition made by the Council of Trent, that *man in the state of grace merits an increase of grace by his good works*.[2] For the holy Doctor professes this truth in the very same words, and explains

[1] $2^a\ 2^{ae}$, q. 24, a. 6.

[2] "Si quis dixerit . . . hominem justificatum, bonis operibus quae ab eo fiunt . . . non vere mereri augmentum gratiae . . . anathema sit." Sess. VI, can. 32.

it thus: "Just as every act of charity merits eternal life, to be possessed not immediately but eventually, on condition of perseverance, so also it merits an increase of charity, to become actual, not upon the instant, but at the time when man shall make the effort to actuate it." The second remark is that acts which are produced with torpor and tepidity, those lukewarm prayers and communions which some persons produce in great numbers, instead of increasing charity in their souls, result only in disposing them for a progressive decline in charity.[1] Here is a serious lesson for souls who are cowardly in the service of God.[2]

[1] As we shall explain in section 7, the diminution here spoken of is indirect, and improperly so called. The actual store of habitual charity (like that of sanctifying grace) in the soul, increases, or remains stationary, or (through mortal sin) is entirely lost; but it does not diminish.

[2] This entire §III calls for some important reservations:—

1. The thought of Saint Thomas on this point is obscure, if we compare the various passages in which he treats it. He says for example that every act which proceeds from charity, even though it be of little fervor, merits an increase of grace, to be bestowed, not immediately, but at such time as an improved disposition shall permit it.

As a consequence, even the most loyal commentators of the Angelic Doctor have offered very divergent explanations of this matter.

2. The reason given, that "an effect cannot be greater than the cause which produces it," is not conclusive in this case, because it is not man's act which is the physical cause of the growth of charity; it is God, who, in consideration of man's act, produces the increase of charity in his soul.

3. In spite of what Father Cotel says, his opinion is very hard to reconcile with the Council of Trent. The Council defines that a man in the state of grace merits an increase of grace by his good works. (Supernatural works, of course, are meant,—works done with the aid of grace.) The Council makes no distinction whatever between works done with a greater or less degree of fervor. Therefore, while we encourage souls to elicit acts of charity which shall be more and more intense (a circumstance which shall increase their merit much more rapidly), still we may conclude, at least with a high degree of probability, and in accordance with many distinguished theologians, that every supernatural act increases

§IV. How to Make Progress in Charity [1]

Everything except God has a beginning, a middle, and an end; and so we must distinguish three stages of charity:—charity just beginning, charity on the advance, and charity come to perfection.

Saint Augustine, comparing charity with the human body, tells us that when it is first born in the soul, it must be nourished in order to live; later it is strengthened until it attains full development.[2] The three degrees of the spiritual life mainly consist in these three practises respectively: first, the avoidance of sin; secondly, the practise of virtue; and, thirdly, union with God.

A soul new-born to the life of grace must begin by making it its chief aim to get rid of sin, and to fight against its concupiscences, which are opposed to charity. This is the work of *beginners,* in whom charity must be nourished and sustained, so that it waste not away and die.

The nourishment and the remedies best suited to this state are the exercise of the fear of God, temperance, mortification, the diligent practise of the examination of conscience, and the frequentation of the sacraments.

Then comes a second stage of charity, in which the

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merit at least a little. This additional merit, it seems, is bestowed by God immediately; otherwise it would run the risk of never being bestowed at all, for want of later, more intense, acts. And such a result would not only render illusory the words of the Council of Trent, but also those in which the Gospel promises a reward for the giving of a glass of water.

Among many authors who may be consulted upon this subject, see Mazzella, De Virtutibus Infusis, 3rd Ed., 1884, pp. 86-92, nn. 161-174.

[1] 2^a 2^{ae}, q. 24, a. 9.

[2] "Caritas, cum fuerit nata, nutritur; cum fuerit nutrita, roboratur; cum fuerit roborata, perficitur; cum autem ad perfectionem venerit, dicit; Cupio dissolvi et esse cum Christo."

chief care should be to advance in well-doing and to strengthen charity by acquiring the virtues. This is the work of those who are called *proficientes,* that is, those who are going ahead by the growth of charity in their souls. One of the chief means to this progress is to meditate and to imitate the virtues of Our Lord and of the saints.

Finally, there is a third degree of charity, that in which a certain perfection has been acquired. When it becomes certain that a soul has reached this state, it may and should apply itself above all to the practise of union with God; for it is the privilege of the *perfect* to enjoy the possession of God, and, like Saint Paul, to "desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ." [1]

Similarly, in the movement of a body the first stage consists in getting away from the starting-point, the second in approaching the finish, and the third in coming to rest there.

Beginners are resolved to advance, but their chief care should be to resist those temptations whose attacks give them the most trouble. Afterward, as they come to feel less keenly the need of these combats, they will bend their efforts with greater confidence toward making positive progress. They shall then imitate those Israelites who were rebuilding the city of Jerusalem in the time of Esdras.[2] With one hand they shall erect the edifice of the virtues, but with the other they shall hold the sword ready against the enemy in case of assault. Even the perfect do not abandon the task of attending to their spiritual progress, for charity here below is always imperfect and still in need of improvement.[3] They cannot even entirely

[1] Philip. 1, *23.*
[2] Esdras 4.
[3] "Perfectio viae non est perfectio simpliciter, et ideo semper habet quo crescat." 2ª 2æ, q. *24,* a. 8, ad 3um.

neglect their enemies, for these are always to be feared, especially as they often return to the charge. Nevertheless, their chief purpose should be to entertain union with God, not by an idle quietude, nor at the sacrifice of duty, but by the motive of perfect love when there is action to be done, by the practise of the presence of God, by the contemplation of His perfections and of His works, by loving Him in all His creatures, and them all in Him. This same union with God, others besides the perfect may also seek, but they must give a larger share of their attention to the rooting out of sin, or to the practise of the virtues and their own advancement in them.

These three degrees of charity in the spiritual life are also called the *purgative* way, the *illuminative* way, and the *unitive* way. The Angelic Doctor gives us a very profitable lesson upon the manner in which these three degrees are to be understood in practise.

Section 7.—The Decrease and the Loss of Charity[1]

I. *Directly,* as Saint Thomas teaches us, the habit of charity can be diminished in the soul neither by the cessation of its acts nor by venial sin.

It cannot be diminished by the cessation of its acts, because charity is not a habit natural to man, but it is the work of God in him.

It cannot be diminished by venial sin, because this, being a disorder which affects only the means, cannot wound charity, which has reference to the end. Besides, a sin in a matter of secondary importance does not merit a punishment of capital grade. God does not turn away from man to a greater extent than man, by his sin, has turned away from God. Yet this is

[1] 2ª 2ªe, q. 24, a. 10.

what would happen if a false step relating to the means were to cause a loss in charity, which consists in union with the end.

Charity therefore cannot be directly diminished by man as regards its substance, that is, the degree of union with God which it sets up in the soul, and the corresponding degree of merit in the life eternal.

But *indirectly,* man may weaken charity in himself, in this sense, that he can pave the way for its extinction, both by venial sins and by ceasing to produce its acts. Venial sins pave the way for the loss of charity, because they dispose one for mortal sin. The cessation of acts of charity is also a preparation for its loss, because it renders the habit of charity less ready to go into action; and then a vicious habit may easily steal upon the soul and overcome it by some mortal sin.

Saint Gregory the Great cites upon this subject the sad example of his aunt, Gordiana. She had vowed her virginity to God, but later, through daily diminution of fervor, she came at last to repudiate her plighted word, and to lose her vocation.[1]

Evidently, in order to understand this whole passage from Saint Thomas, we must distinguish between the substance of charity and the fervor and alacrity which characterize its acts. It is these qualities that are in so great danger of growing cold and of diminishing by reason of venial sin and relaxation.

II. In heaven, where God is seen face to face, as He is, His infinite goodness and beauty thus manifested to the blessed, so completely ravish their affections that

[1] "Caepit paulatim a calore amoris intimi per quotidiana decrementa tepescere; unde factum est ut postmodum oblita dominici timoris, oblita pudoris, oblita reverentiae, oblita consecrationis, conductorem agrorum suorum matrimonio duxerit."

it becomes impossible for them to lose charity. But on earth, where we perceive God only through the veils of faith, we are always liable to the terrible evil of losing charity through sin.

A single mortal sin is enough to destroy charity in the soul; and then he who by reason of it possessed the life of grace and the merit of eternal life, becomes upon the instant worthy of eternal death.

In the case of the acquired virtues a single contrary act does not destroy the virtuous habit. Nothing in fact will do so, short of a succession of acts which weaken it little by little and at last wipe it out entirely. But since charity is an infused virtue, it depends on the action of God, who has infused it and who keeps it alive in the soul. Now, this divine action may be compared to the manner in which the sun sheds its light through the air. The air would cease to be illumined if an obstacle intervened to hinder the action of the sun. In like manner charity ceases to exist in the soul of the just man as soon as an obstacle intercepts the divine influx. Evidently every mortal sin constitutes such an obstacle. By the very fact that man prefers his sin to the friendship of God, that friendship is broken, and at that moment the habit of charity is lost.

In fact, man may lose charity in two ways. He loses it directly by formally despising it, a thing which happens when he sins maliciously; and in such case it is much more difficult to recover it. He loses it indirectly when he sins by reason of being suddenly surprised by temptation and carried off in a heat of passion. It is in this latter way that Saint Peter lost charity; but he promptly recovered it by penitence. A sin of malice is therefore far more hurtful to the soul than is a sin of frailty.

III. The sins of religious.[1]

Saint Thomas puts this question: Does a religious sin more grievously than a person in the world, when he offends God in the same matter? Here is his answer: If the religious sins through contempt, or against his vows, or by giving scandal, his sin is more grievous than that of the secular person; but the contrary is true if he sins through ignorance or frailty.

When he sins through contempt and malice, he does indeed show a greater ingratitude toward the divine Goodness, which has by special favor raised him to the state of perfection. It is this of which the Lord through His Prophet complains: "What is the meaning that My beloved hath wrought much wickedness in My house?" [2]

If a religious sins against his vows, his sin is the greater, because it contains a two-fold malice, as we have already shown.

If he gives scandal by his sin, the religious is usually the more culpable, because his life is observed by a larger number of persons.

When, however, a religious commits a fault, not through contempt nor malice, but owing to infirmity or ignorance, and when there is neither scandal nor the violation of his vows, his sin is less grievous than that of a person in the world would be, in this sense, that his sin does less harm. This sin, if it be venial, is as it were absorbed by the great number of good works which are done in the religious life. If it be mortal, the religious rises more easily after the fall; and that for two reasons.

First, his intention is habitually directed to God; and hence, if it suffer a momentary deviation, it can be easily set right again and the damage can be re-

[1] 2ª 2ae, q. 186, a. 10.
[2] Jer. 11, *15*.

paired.[1] This idea is found in Origen, where he explains these words of the Psalm: "When he shall fall he shall not be bruised, for the Lord putteth His hand under him."[2] The unjust man, says Origen, when he has sinned, is not sorry for it, and does not amend his life; whereas the just man corrects himself without delay. He who had said of his divine Master, *"I know not the man,"* needed but a look from the Lord to weep bitterly; and David, who on seeing a woman from his roof had allowed passion to get the better of him, was able very soon afterward to say, *"To Thee, O God, have I sinned, and have done evil before Thee."*

The second reason is that the religious who falls has in his brethren a help by which to right himself, according to those words of the Wise Man: "If one fall, he shall be supported by the other. Woe to him that is alone, for when he falleth, he hath none to lift him up."[3]

The just will hardly sin through contempt; and that is why, if they do chance to fall, they will easily rise. But if they fall so low as to sin through contempt, they become very bad, even the most incorrigible of all sinners. Hence those terrible words of Saint Augustine: "Since I began to serve God I have learned by experience that just as there are scarcely to be found any better Christians than those in religious houses, who live good lives, so too there are none more depraved than those who, in the same places, give themselves up to sin."

Would it not be well, when speaking of the sins of

[1] Thus, the needle of a compass which is well magnetized, after an accidental deviation, turns back of its own accord, and once more points north.

[2] Ps. 36, *24*.

[3] Eccles. 4, *10*.

religious persons, to present these two points from the teaching of the Angelic Doctor upon the subject?

Section 8.—Charity in Its Relation to the Other Virtues

Charity is rightly called the *form,* the *mother,* the *foundation,* the *bond,* and the *end* of all other virtues; which shows how pre-eminently it is the queen of them all, and in how many respects it is essential to religious perfection.[1]

I. Charity is the *form* of the other virtues, not if these are considered in their specific natures, for then each virtue has its own proper form, derived from the object upon which it acts; but rather in this sense, that charity superimposes its own form upon each virtue, a form without which not one of them would deserve the name of virtue in its strict and absolute acceptation.[2]

Every virtue is in its essence a habit which has for its object moral good. Now, goodness resides chiefly in the end of an action, the means being good only in as far as they conduce to the end. Consequently, as there are two different ends, the one proximate, the other ultimate, so there are two sorts of good, the proximate or particular, and the ultimate, supreme, or universal. In the case of man, the final good which must include all others, is the possession of God, according to those words of the Psalmist: "It is good for me to adhere to my God." [3] This good is attained by man, only through charity.

As to man's proximate, secondary, or particular good, it is of two kinds. The one is a genuine good,

[1] 2^a 2^{ae}, q. 23, a. 7.

[2] "Simpliciter vera virtus, sine caritate esse non potest." At least, without habitual charity, (and the state of grace which always accompanies it), all other virtues would be quite useless for eternal life.

[3] Ps. *72, 28.*

because it serves as a means to attain the last end, which is the supreme Good. The other is only apparent, because it turns man aside from the final good. No virtue therefore can be genuine unless it be, through charity, made conducive to man's supreme good, the attainment of his last end.

If one call that a virtue which confines itself to the attainment of some particular good which is not in turn referred, through charity, to the ultimate good, such a virtue may have some reality. Nevertheless, if the particular good be only apparent and not real, the virtue itself will be nothing more than an apparent one. Saint Augustine says upon this point: "We do not count as true virtues either the prudence of misers by which they learn the secret of amassing wealth, nor their justice, which makes them respect the rights of others only through fear of punishment, nor their temperance, which represses in them the sumptuous inclinations of sensuality, nor finally the strength of purpose with which, as the poet says, they flee from poverty across oceans, rocks, and flames." [1] If the particular good be a genuine one, such as, for example, the relief of those in distress, filial dutifulness, or fidelity to one's word, though the virtue will be in a certain sense genuine, still it will be but imperfectly so, as long as it does not conduce to the ultimate and perfect good. The conclusion therefore stands, that without charity there is no true virtue in the strict sense of the word.

Would to God that every one understood this fundamental truth! Would to God that even religious persons applied it more effectively to all their actions! Without charity, all virtue, if any there be, is of a crawling sort, and does not rise above the earth. With

[1] "Per mare pauperiem fugiunt, per saxa, per ignes." Horat. Lib. 1, Epist. 1.

charity and through charity, the most lowly virtue has the power to rise even to heaven, and to merit the supreme Good.

II. "Charity is *the mother of all virtues.*" Since its special object, the goal to which it aspires, is the possession of God Himself, its desire to possess Him in an ever fuller measure causes it to *conceive* acts of the other virtues in the interest of its own purpose. These acts, charity actually *brings forth* when it inspires the will to produce them. Hence the Apostle attributes them all to charity. "Charity," he says, "is patient, is kind: charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely; is not puffed up." [1]

This explains how charity, in proportion as it increases in a soul, becomes more and more fruitful of acts of all the virtues. It stimulates the other virtues to action, demands of them signs of life and activity. On the other hand, if the virtues produce but little fruit in a soul, the reason is that charity is weak and languishing. The entire inactivity of the other virtues would be proof positive of the total absence of charity.

III. Charity is *the foundation of the virtues.*

There are three virtues of which it is said that they are the foundation of all the others. These three are humility, faith, and charity. Let us see in what sense the term foundation may be applied to each of them. Here is Saint Thomas' exposition of the matter as regards humility and faith.[2]

Just as the well-ordered combination of all the virtues may be compared to a building, so too the first thing needed for this spiritual edifice may be compared to its foundation. Now, man's virtues are much less his own work than they are the work of God, to whom it belongs to instill them in us and to give them in-

[1] I Cor. 13, *4*.
[2] *2ª 2æ*, q. 161, a. 5.

crease. Hence one virtue may be called the foundation of the others, either directly or indirectly.

1. The virtue which should be regarded as being *indirectly* the foundation of the others is the one which does away with the obstacles to God's action in our souls. In this respect humility occupies the first place, because it banishes pride, which "God resisteth";[1] it cures the swelling caused by this vice, and presents to the action of divine grace, a soul which is submissive and wholly open to its influence.[2] In this sense humility is the foundation of the spiritual edifice of all the virtues, according to those words of Saint Augustine: "If you would erect a building of great height, look to its foundation, which is humility. The loftier the building is to be, the deeper must its foundations be laid."[3]

2. The virtue which is *directly* the foundation of the others is that one by which men are brought near to God, the Lord of the virtues. Now, it is through faith that man approaches God, as the Apostle teaches us: "He that cometh to God must believe that He is."[4] In this sense faith is the foundation of the virtues in a higher way than is humility.

3. Yet Saint Paul calls also charity a foundation. "You are," says he to the Christians, "rooted and founded in charity."[5] Like a foundation, like a root, charity sustains and nourishes all the other virtues. It is their living and life-giving foundation, as the root is for all the branches of the tree, and therefore in a

[1] "God resisteth the proud." II Pet. 5, *5*.

[2] These strong expressions are well worthy of meditation: "Praebet hominem subditum et patulum divinae gratiae."

[3] Cogitas magnam fabricam construere celsitudinis, de fundamento prius cogita humilitatis; et quanto erit majus aedificium, tanto altius foditur fundamentum.

[4] Heb. 11, *6*.

[5] Ephes. 3, *17*.

still higher manner than are either humility or faith. Hence those beautiful words of Pope Saint Gregory: "Whatever God commands man is based upon charity alone. Just as the various boughs of a tree spring from a single root, so the divers virtues are all outgrowths of charity. The branch of good works loses all its freshness if it be not united to the root of charity." [1]

IV. Charity is *the bond of the other virtues.*[2] Hence the Apostle, after having said that we must above all possess charity, hastens to add that it is the bond of perfection.[3]

As the other virtues are necessary to well-rounded perfection,[4] it is the part of charity not only to produce and nourish them, but also to bind them all together in a sheaf in perfect unity. Since charity is the life of all good works by which man must reach his last end, it must of necessity be united to all the other virtues which produce the various classes of good works. For this reason the moral virtues in the just man are bound together, not only by prudence, but also by charity. Held fast by this bond of charity, which is both gentle and strong, all the virtues abide with charity in the soul; as long as charity is there, not one of the others can be missing. It is also through it that they all maintain a harmonious union, one virtue being rendered incapable of acting in opposition to any other. This is Christian perfection, or sanctity; and,

[1] "Quidquid praecipitur, in sola caritate solidatur: ut enim multi aboris rami ex una radice prodeunt, sic multae virtutes ex una caritate generantur; nec habet aliquid viriditatis ramus boni operis, si non manet in radice caritatis."

[2] $2^a\ 2^{ae}$, q. 184, a. 1.

[3] "But above all these things have charity, which is the bond of perfection." Coloss. *3, 14.*

[4] Upon this subject, cf. Chap. II, Art. III, Sect. 1.

as we know from the history of the canonization of the saints, the Catholic Church, before she authoritatively declares the existence of sanctity in any Christian, demands incontrovertible proof that the individual in question possessed in a heroic degree this sheaf of all the virtues united by charity.

V. Finally, charity is the *end of all the other virtues,*[1] because it keeps them all under its command and control, and marshals them all toward its own end. They are all, as it were, the instruments, the servants of charity. Some help to put away the obstacles which would embarrass its union with God; among these are fortitude, patience, and self-denial, with its derivatives, humility, temperance, mortification, modesty, etc. There are other virtues which are employed more directly in the exercise of charity either toward God or toward our neighbor. Such are faith, hope, religion, justice, zeal, etc.

But of all the virtues which conduce to the perfection of charity, there are three which deserve the special attention of religious persons; they are the three which are consecrated by the religious vows,—poverty, chastity, and obedience. In the following article we shall examine more fully their relation to charity.

ARTICLE IV

MEANS OF PERFECTION FOUND IN THE RELIGIOUS STATE

These means are of two kinds, principal and secondary. The former conduce very effectively to the perfection of charity; the latter concur with them, and besides are very useful for the perfection of the

[1] $2^a\ 2^{ae}$, q. 23, a. 8.

other virtues. The means in question are *the vows,* and *the rules.*

Section 1—The Principal Means of Perfection, the Vows [1]

I. The religious state is a *discipline,* in the sense that it is *a school in which to learn, and a course upon which to train,* for the purpose of acquiring the perfection of charity. Now, to this end, four things are necessary.

In the first place, it is necessary in the religious state to practise voluntary poverty, the actual deprivation of temporal goods. Perfect charity requires that man wean his affections completely away from earthly goods, in order to turn them entirely toward God, according to those words of Saint Augustine: "He loves Thee not enough, O Lord, who loves aught else with Thee, that he loves not for Thee," [2] or, as he says elsewhere, "Charity lives on what is withdrawn from cupidity; it is perfect when cupidity is entirely destroyed." [3] But we know from experience that whoever possesses temporal goods is in great danger of being attached to them, as Saint Augustine again forcefully remarks: "Earthly wealth takes a much stronger hold on the heart when it is possessed than when it is merely desired. For, why did the young man in the Gospel go away sad, except that he had great possessions? It is one thing to feel no craving to incorporate with ourselves what is outside of us; it is quite another to be willing to tear away what is already ours. In the first case it is a foreign substance that we repulse; in the second, it is as though our very limbs were being

[1] 2^a 2^{ae}, q. 186, aa. 3, 4, 5, 6.

[2] "Minus te amat qui tecum amat aliquid quod non propter te amat."

[3] "Nutrimentum caritatis est imminutio cupiditatis; perfectio, nulla cupiditas."

amputated."[1] For this reason, evangelical poverty is the very first foundation to be laid when there is question of acquiring the perfection of charity; for our Savior Himself has said: "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor."[2]

In the second place, there must be continence. To begin with, sensuous pleasures, though they be licit, are a considerable obstacle to the complete turning of all man's affection toward God. The same thing may be said of the cares that are demanded in the management and temporal maintenance of a family. As Saint Paul puts it, "he that is with a wife is solicitous for the things of the world . . . and he is divided."[3]

Thirdly, obedience is necessary above all, according to the counsel of our Lord, "if thou wilt be perfect . . come, follow Me." Now, the particular virtue of our divine Model, which lends itself especially to our imitation, is His obedience, as Saint Paul says: "He became obedient unto death."[4] Let us remember that the religious state is an apprenticeship, a course of training for the purpose of acquiring perfection. Those who learn and practise in order to become proficient, like scholars under a master, need some one to teach and to guide them. It is therefore necessary for religious to be under the direction and authority of some one during the whole course of their religious life; and this is done through obedience. "The religious life is a life of submission, and a school."[5]

Fourthly, in order to be committed wholly and constantly to the perfection of charity, one must engage one's self to these three practises by vow. As Saint

[1] "Terrena diliguntur arctius adepta, quam concupita . . . Aliud est enim nolle incorporare quae desunt, aliud jam incorporata divellere. Illa enim velut extranea repudiantur, ista vero velut membra praescinduntur."

[2] Matt. 19, *21*. [3] I Cor. *7*, *33*. [4] Philip. *2*, *8*.

[5] "Monachorum vita subjectionis habet verbum et discipulatus." In Decreto Gratiani, 2ª parte, causa VII, q. 1, c. 45.

Gregory says, "to offer to the Lord by vow all one's temporal goods, all the enjoyment of one's body, and all the satisfaction of doing one's own will,—that is the perfect sacrifice of holocaust." [1]

Moreover, since the perfection of life consists in consecrating it entirely to the service of God, this perfection requires that whatever one desires to consecrate to Him, be actually bestowed. But, as it is impossible to give to God, by a single act, one's whole life which flows on in a continuous succession, there is no other way to make it entirely His, than by assuming the obligation of a perpetual vow. Thus only is the entire life consecrated.

II. Saint Thomas summarizes as follows all that the three vows of religion do for the perfection of charity.[2]

The religious state may be considered under three aspects: first, it removes the interior obstacles to perfection; secondly, it frees the heart from external cares; thirdly, it is a holocaust in which everything without reserve is offered to God. Now, in these three ways, the religious state supplies fully all that is requisite to the perfection of charity.

1. It removes the interior obstacles which prevent a complete turning of our affections toward God. These obstacles are three. The first is covetousness, and this is curbed by the vow of poverty. The concupiscence of the flesh is the second; and this is excluded by the vow of chastity. The third is disorder in the will; and this is done away with by the vow of obedience, which places the will under the direction of God Himself commanding in the person of the superior.

2. It removes the principal exterior obstacles,—ob-

[1] "Cum quis omne quod habet, omne quod vivit, omne quod sapit, omnipotenti Deo voverit, holocaustum est."
[2] 2^a 2^{ae}, q. 186, a. 7.

jects of solicitude which disturb the soul. Such are the acquisition and administration of temporal goods, the government of a family, the disposal of one's own activity. These three sources of anxiety are cut off by the three vows of religion, which realize the wish conceived by Saint Paul for perfect Christians, "I would have you to be without solicitude." [1]

3. In its third aspect the religious state does more than to withdraw obstacles: it actually constitutes the practise of perfect charity. A holocaust is, as Saint Gregory has said, to sacrifice all one has for God's sake. Now, there are three sorts of goods which a man may possess: wealth, which he sacrifices to God by the vow of voluntary poverty; bodily pleasures, which he gives up for the love of God by the vow of continence; and the pleasures of the soul, which he offers up entirely by obedience, since together with his will he sacrifices all the faculties and habits of his soul.

III. At this point two objections present themselves, one against religious poverty, the other against religious obedience.

Here is the first: giving alms to the poor is a work that is so pleasing to God, and so grateful to the spirit! And yet it is made impossible by voluntary poverty. Once I shall have stripped myself of everything, this source of merit and consolation will be beyond my reach. Such is the pretext which the enemy of salvation sometimes makes use of to head off an impressionable person from the way of religious perfection.

The truth is, answers Saint Thomas, that compared with the giving of alms, the renouncing of all one's possessions is like a universal good compared with a particular one,—or like a holocaust, wherein the entire

[1] I Cor. *7, 32.*

victim is offered up, compared with other sacrifices, in which a part of the victim is reserved.[1]

Hence Saint Jerome, refuting the error of Vigilantius, speaks in these terms: "It is good to distribute one's goods to the poor by successive charities, but it is better still to give all at once, in order to follow Jesus Christ, and to live poor with Christ, after having cut off all earthly solicitude." Besides, there is that sacrifice, so full of abnegation and humility, the sacrifice of the heart itself, when a religious is reduced to the necessity of saying to the beggar who appeals to him for alms, "Alas, I have nothing more to give."[2]

Here is the objection against religious obedience. The services which are most pleasing to God are those which are spontaneous. But spontaneity is replaced by necessity when one has made a vow to obey. The same objection may be urged against the other two vows; they kill the merit of spontaneous self-denial.

Again Saint Thomas replies: necessity of constraint makes the act involuntary, and consequently does away with its merit; but that is not the kind of necessity which results from the vow of obedience. Under this vow a person remains complete master of his own will; he acts because he wills to act, even though the thing commanded, considered in itself, be not according to his inclination. Because he has, for the love of God, assumed this obligation of doing things which suit not his pleasure, these actions are the more pleasing to God, even though they be in themselves less perfect than others which would be according to his taste. Man can make to the Lord no greater gift than the

[1] $2^a\ 2^{ae}$, q. 186, a. 3, ad 6^{um}; a. 5, ad 5^{um}; a. 6, ad 3^{um}.

[2] Although religious persons give but few alms individually, the communities to which they belong give many, and devote to all kinds of well-doing whatever is not essential for their own support. The poor and the cause of good works are far from being the losers.

submission of his will to the will of another for His sake.

The same principle applies to the necessity which is imposed by the other two vows. Since man values liberty above all else, to give up freely the power of acting in a manner opposed to perfect poverty and chastity, is to use his liberty in the manner that is most pleasing to God. Saint Augustine addresses these words to religious: "Do not regret having bound yourself by vows. Rejoice, rather, that you may now no longer do things that would otherwise have been allowed you to your loss. Happy that necessity which constrains us to a better life!" [1]

Section 2—The Secondary Means of Perfection, the Rules

The *Catechism of the Vows* indicates in a few words [2] how helpful are the rules in enabling a religious to tend toward perfection. We shall here add some useful explanations of this matter.

I. A *rule,* (in Latin, *regula,* in Greek, *canon*), is an architectural tool with which every one is familiar. Just as a rule is indispensable for material building operations, it is equally necessary for the spiritual edifice of virtue and perfection.

The essential quality of a rule is that it be straight. According to Saint Isidore, *regula* is like *rectula,* because of the rectitude which is inherent in it. The philosopher Seneca wisely observes that "to guide one's self by a rule which one has one's self falsified, is to

[1] "Non te vovisse poeniteat, imo gaude jam tibi non licere quod cum tuo detrimento licuisset. Felix necessitas quae in meliora compellit."

[2] Part I, Chap. II.

outrage right;" [1]—a splendid maxim, which points out the fundamental obliquity, the irremediable cause of all others. "The rule," says Saint Gregory, "is susceptible neither of enlargement nor contraction; if it were it would lose its essential quality of a rule." [2] In a word, if the rule be not right, it deceives the builder, spoils his work, nay, goes so far as even to endanger the stability of the edifice. This explains why, when there is question of a rule of religious life, the approbation of the Church is necessary as a guarantee of its rectitude. Hence too it means much to a religious institute that its rule, once approved, be not tampered with, but that it be looked upon by all with affectionate regard, as being right.

II. The rule in the hands of the mason shows him whether the wall he is erecting is vertical and in line. If a stone is too far in, he pushes it out; if another protrudes, he resets it. This comparison, which is borrowed from Saint Gregory,[3] is of constant application to the work of perfection.

Rule comes from the word *regere*. The purpose of the rule is to *direct* or to *correct;* [4] in the moral order, it directs by showing what to do or to avoid; it corrects by bringing into line whatever has diverged from the *right*, and by reproving and punishing what is *wrong*.

III. By the *rule of an institute* is meant the sum total of all the laws which concern it. It is made up of elements of two kinds, some essential, others supplementary. One who professes the rule, says Saint Thomas, or rather one who professes to live according

[1] "Regulam si flectas, quidquid ex illa mutaveris, injuria est recti."

[2] "Regula nec addi sibi quidquam, nec demi sustinet; alioquin hoc ipsum quod regula est, amittit ac perdit."

[3] "Ut si lapis intus est foras emittatur; si autem exterius prominet, interius revocetur."

[4] "Regula a regendo, id est, dirigendo et corrigendo, quia vel rectum dirigit, vel distortum corrigit."

to the rule, does not bind himself to observe all its details; but he professes the regular life, which consists essentially in keeping the three vows. In particular rules, points of observance are prescribed, not as precepts binding under pain of sin, but by way of regulation or direction, merely imposing some penalty in case of default. Since, however, the religious has agreed to live according to the rule, that is, to constrain himself to form his life upon it as the model set before him, he would break this promise and would sin, even grievously, were he to entertain contempt for the rule in any particular. Such contempt exists when the transgression springs precisely from the fact that the will refuses to submit to the rule. It is not a sin of contempt to infringe some point of the rule, from any other special reason, such as anger, laziness, or the like. But these infractions, if frequent, will little by little grow into contempt.[1]

IV. A distinction is often made between the *rule,* in the singular, and the *rules,* in the plural.

According to this distinction, the rule is simply the summary of the most important features of the institute.

But this rule, because of its brevity, calls for further developments in accordance with its spirit. Hence the *rules of detail,* or *constitutions,* whether they apply to the body of the institute or are to be observed by the members individually.

Nowadays the Holy See does not allow the use of the name of rule as a designation of the sum total of the constitutions of a modern congregation. This name is

[1] 2^a 2^{ae}, q. 186, a. 9. If one fail to observe a rule or a command of superiors, because one deems it of little importance, it is only material contempt, and hence not necessarily a grievous sin. There is formal contempt if one despise the rule as such, or the authority itself which gave the command. This is, at bottom, to despise God, the source of all authority.

reserved to the ancient orders. Various modern congregations have, however, adopted an ancient rule, that of Saint Augustine for instance, adding to it their own *constitutions;* and this latter is the term now used. The four principal rules, if we consider their influence upon many religious societies, are those of Saint Basil, Saint Benedict, Saint Augustine, and Saint Francis. May we, without presumption, associate with these the rule of Saint Ignatius, which has been the chief inspiration of so many institutes?[1]

V. Among the rules or constitutions which concern the individual members of an institute, we distinguish two sorts.

Some have as their purpose to form the individual according to the peculiar spirit of the institute; these are the *rules of the interior life.* From these principles every religious must draw a host of practical consequences which will advance him toward the positive perfection of his vows, and of the virtues of his vocation. Rules of this kind prescribe a *tendency,* that is, a certain constant effort and progressive advance, rather than any specific acts to be done or avoided. Consequently, while all must apply themselves to follow their guidance, still they are not, and for the most part can not be, observed by every one in exactly the same way. There is quite a wide variance in their observance by different persons, each one practising them according to the measure of grace which he receives, and in proportion to his state of fervor and to the progress which he has already made in perfection.

There is another class of rules whose object is discipline or the common life in external matters; hence

[1] It matters little that the Saint called the summary of the principal points of his new order, not a rule, but constitutions. Saint Augustine was still farther from professing to write a religious rule. That which bears his name was made up in the twelfth century, from his writings.

they are sometimes called *common rules*. These prescribe or forbid certain exterior acts; their purpose is to establish the visible form of community life according to the institute, and to safeguard the welfare of the community. Hence their observance is required of each individual, and of the entire group; for it is through them that all must acquire a common likeness and appear as members of the same body; it is through them that the members recognize each other as brothers, and that a certain family resemblance marks them all as children of the same mother.

This general advantage is in itself enough to arouse all to the careful observance of the common rules; but they contain besides, for each individual, a special fruit of personal sanctity which is surely worthy of all his efforts. "My great means of mortification is the common life," a perfect religious, Saint John Berchmans, was accustomed to say. In these words he pointed out one of the richest sources of religious perfection, a fountain which is constantly flowing through a multitude of channels. Truly, the observance of the rules is, as the Prophet says, "a sacrifice to the Lord by ordinance continual and everlasting." [1]

VI. *The practise of the virtues according to the rules.* The Christian and religious virtues are common to all Christians and to all religious; but the acts of these virtues are often diversified according to the variety of vocations. It is of the highest importance for the genuine practise of virtue, to take note of this difference, even when there is question of imitating the saints. Otherwise, one may fall a victim to illusions; for what is praiseworthy in one may be blamable in another. Thus mortification, zeal, charity toward the neighbor, silence, and the other virtues, must be practised in various ways, according to the various

[1] Ezech. 46, *14*.

institutes, and according to circumstances. Hence Saint Anthony insisted on the virtue of *discretion,* whose office it is to moderate the acts of all the other virtues. And how often our own personal discretion would be at fault if it depended exclusively on its own lights. The religious draws more definite direction from his rules. They give him dependable guidance in the practise of the virtues, and teach him to practise them according to the will and good pleasure of God.

VII. We might inquire what obligation exists to tend toward perfection by the practise of the rules, but the *Catechism of the Vows* gives a sufficient explanation on this point.[1] For a fuller treatment, the reader is referred to Rodriguez[2] and to Father Saint-Jure.[3]

ARTICLE V

THE VOWS OF RELIGION ARE TAKEN ACCORDING TO THE RULE OR THE CONSTITUTIONS. VARIOUS DEGREES IN RELIGIOUS PERFECTION

The vows of religion are taken according to the specific rule of each institute. He who pronounces them must understand them, and he agrees to observe them, in the sense in which they are interpreted under the constitutions of the religious body to which he is being admitted.

Hence arises the obligation on the part of superiors, first, to instruct novices fully upon this point, and then to make sure that all the religious retain an accurate understanding of it.

A consequence related to the subject under discussion is this: the greater or less degree of perfection in the practise of the vows of religion as defined by the

[1] Part II, Chap. III, Art. II, n. 134 sq.
[2] Christian Perfection, Part I, First Treatise, Chap. 6, sq.; Part III, Sixth Treatise.
[3] "L'homme religieux," Bk. I, Chap. 3.

rule, produces a corresponding variety of degrees in religious perfection itself.

There is of course a *perfection* which is *common* to all institutes. It consists in the common profession of the evangelical counsels by the three essential vows of religion. But there is besides a *perfection* which is *peculiar* to each institute, and which is the ideal of all its members. This perfection is more or less lofty according as the rule (or the constitutions), requires a more or less perfect practise of the evangelical counsels.

Lastly, there is the *personal perfection* which every religious strives to imbibe from his own institute. This again offers a variety of degrees, depending upon the interior principle of grace and the cooperation of the individual.

This personal perfection is the most important to consider. It is this alone which assigns to each religious his real merit in the eyes of God. Moreover, God Himself, in calling one to an institute which in itself is less perfect, may well destine him for a higher degree of interior perfection, and may by special graces which are faithfully followed, elevate him to a higher degree of sanctity.

Personal perfection has its stages of growth,—its ages, as it were. The perfection of the novice differs from that of the religious who has made some progress; and that of the finished religious differs from both. "Perfection is demanded of all," says Saint Bernard,[1] "but not a uniform perfection. If you are

[1] "Ab omnibus perfectio exigitur, licet non uniformis: si incipis, perfecte incipe; si jam in profectu es, hoc ipsum perfecte age; sin autem aliquid perfectionis attigisti, teipsum in teipso metire et dic cum Apostolo: non quod jam apprehenderim aut perfectus sim, sequor autem si quo modo comprehendam, quae retro sunt obliviscens, ad ea vero quae sunt priora extendens meipsum."—De Vita Solitari; Philip. *3, 12, 13.*

beginning, begin in a perfect manner; if you are in the way of progress, in this too, be perfect; and if you have already attained some degree of perfection, measure yourself according to your ideal, and say with the Apostle: 'Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect; but I follow after, if I may by any means apprehend; forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth myself to those that are before.'" Charity causes those who are really advanced to redouble their ardor and hasten their pace. It is like the law of gravity, which urges bodies to rapid motion, and accelerates their speed in proportion as they approach the center of attraction.

ARTICLE VI

VARIOUS STATES WHICH EXIST IN THE CHURCH COMPARED IN THEIR RELATION TO PERFECTION

This would appear to be a useful subject of inquiry, with which to close the present chapter on the *state of perfection*. The Angelic Doctor has treated the matter with admirable clarity.[1]

§I

The royal Prophet likens the spouse of Christ, holy Church, to a queen "in gilded clothing, surrounded with variety."[2] The dress of gold here referred to is charity; and the variety of colors which enhance its lustre is the diversity of *states, offices,* and *degrees* which are found in the Church.

The *states* of Christian life differ from one another

[1] 2^a 2^{ae}, q. 183, a. 2; q. 184, aa. 7, 8.
[2] Ps. 44, *10*.

in as much as some oblige persons in a higher and more stable manner than others, to evangelical perfection.[1]

The distinction in *offices* or *functions* arises from the fact that this or that class of persons in the Church is chosen to perform certain necessary duties, such as the functions of the ecclesiastical ministry.

Finally, there is a difference of *degrees* in the same state or office, since some individuals are above others in authority, or in honor and dignity.

Bishops occupy the highest rank not only as regards degree and office but also by reason of the perfection of their state. They are permanently established in a position which obliges them irrevocably to the guardianship and care of the flock of Christ. This state of perfection is superior even to the religious state. And rightly so; for in order to lead others to perfection, one must be already perfect; whereas, in order to be led to perfection, it is enough that one desires to tend toward it. Hence a bishop is in the *state of perfection already acquired;*[2] a religious is only in the *state of perfection to be acquired.* Our Lord, before entrusting His sheep to Saint Peter, said to him, "Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me?" and only after an affirmative answer thrice repeated did He add, "Feed My lambs. Feed My sheep."[3] To the religious He says only, "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, . . . and come, follow Me."[4]

Why does not a bishop make vows of poverty and obedience, as does a religious? He is supposed to have

[1] Cf. Chap. II, Art. II, Sect. 1.

[2] Some authors criticize this expression. It must, of course, be understood of relative perfection, which alone is possible on earth. The saintliest bishop can sanctify himself still more; and the holier he is, the more ardent will be his efforts to advance in holiness.

[3] John, 21, *15-18.*

[4] Matt. 19, *21.*

no further need of these two means of acquiring perfection, because he must be already in possession of it through charity. Besides, once he is called to the episcopate, the practise of these vows is hardly compatible with his office and degree; for in his position he must command rather than obey, and must have the means of relieving even the temporal necessities of his flock. Still, in case of urgent need, he is, by virtue of the perfection of his state, obliged more strictly than any one else to deprive himself in order to come to the aid of his people.

The *state* of simple priest is not in itself the *state of perfection.* The vow of continence does not give him all that is essential to this state, though it does raise him above the state of ordinary life. Moreover, he is not, as is a bishop, necessarily or irrevocably bound to shepherd the flock of Christ. Hence his *state* is called *the state of secular priest.* In comparison with the state of a religious, it is like a minor sacrifice compared with a holocaust.

As regards *orders,* the priest, whatever his state, whether secular or religious, is charged by the Church with the performance of very sacred actions, especially in the adorable mysteries of the Eucharist. This demands of him a sanctity or interior perfection above even that which God requires of a lay-religious. If a priest acts in a manner contrary to sanctity, he is more blameworthy than is a simple religious, although the latter has in his state means of sanctification as well as obligations which the secular priest has not.

Because of this higher sanctity which is demanded of a priest, Saint Jerome used to say to the lay-religious of his day (such were nearly all the religious at that time), "Live such a life in the monastery that you may be worthy to become a cleric." [1] And how many

[1] Sic vive in monasterio ut clericus esse merearis.

religious have found in the state of perfection the means of making themselves more worthy of the priesthood! Yet, after their ordination, far from having lost anything by the combination of the priesthood with the religious life, they have found in the religious state great helps toward becoming ever more perfect priests.

The *degree,* or the post to which a priest, whether secular or religious, is assigned by the Church, the administration of a parish for example, gives him certain powers which a simple religious priest has not, but it effects no change whatever as regards the perfection of his state. It only creates new obligations for him, and fresh difficulties too, which he will need a more solid virtue and a higher interior sanctity to overcome. As we have seen, some of the difficulties one meets in the performance of duty diminish merit, while others augment it.[1]

§II

In connection with what we have just said, an incidental question here presents itself: *Do religious belong to the hierarchy?* We must distinguish two different hierarchies in the Church. One is the *hierarchy by divine right,* that namely, which Christ our Lord Himself established; the other is the *hierarchy by ecclesiastical law,* that is, the one which the Church has added to the first.

The hierarchy by divine right consists of bishops, priests, and ministers of lower rank; this is a point of Catholic faith defined by the Council of Trent.[2] It is

[1] Cf. Chap II, Art. II, Sect. 2.

[2] Sess. XXIII, can 6, Denzinger-Bannwart, no. 966. There is question here of the hierarchy of *order* instituted by Christ in its three principal degrees, but supplemented by the Church; for the minor orders and the subdiaconate are very probably of purely ecclesiastical origin.

In the paragraphs which follow, Father Cotel mentions the

quite evident that in this hierarchy there is no difference between a secular and a religious cleric.[1]

The hierarchy by ecclesiastical law is of two kinds: first, there is the *general and principal hierarchy* which presides over the universal government of the Church; then, there is the *special hierarchy or religious.*

The general and principal hierarchy is established to facilitate the good government of the entire Christian people. Hence we have within the order of bishops, the degrees of patriarch, primate, and metropolitan; in the order of priesthood, the degrees of arch-deacon, arch-priest, dean, pastor, and so on. These degrees have varied in the Church at different times according to locality and need. Religious are by no means excluded by their state from this general hierarchy; there have even been times when it included a far greater number of religious than of seculars.

The special hierarchy of religious is only a secondary

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hierarchy of *government,* of *precedence in honor,* and of *jurisdiction.* All this is by ecclesiastical law, except the jurisdiction of the Pope and of the bishops. The divine constitution of the Church, by the will of her Founder, necessarily includes bishops who are invested with jurisdiction over the rest of the faithful,—equal to the Pope as regards the powers of order, but beneath him in jurisdiction, and subject to his supreme authority. Jurisdiction, which is a participation in the public power of the Church, includes in the exterior forum, the right to make laws and see to their execution; in the interior forum, the power of absolving from sin in the tribunal of penance and of granting certain dispensations. We see therefore that some religious superiors have true authority without possessing any jurisdiction in the strict sense of the word. The same is true of pastors in the external forum. We trust that no reader will confuse the orders, such as the diaconate, the priesthood, etc., with the exempt religious orders which will be mentioned a little farther on.

[1] A person becomes a *cleric* by receiving the tonsure (canon 198 §1). Religious who have not the tonsure (and religious women, too, including novices), though not clerics in the strict sense, enjoy the privileges, and as far as their state permits are subject also to the obligations of clerics (canons 592, 614).

one; it is essentially dependent upon the rulers of the first,—notably upon its supreme hierarch, the Roman Pontiff, the Vicar of Christ. Yet it is itself a true hierarchy, duly constituted, and having its own degrees. It includes abbots and other religious prelates designated by various names; also superiors, general, provincial, and local; and, like the other hierarchy, it too goes back to the head of the Church, who is strictly and properly the Supreme Prelate of all religious.[1]

In the matter of *precedence of honor,* religious, if they be not members of the principal hierarchy, are ranked only after the secular clergy.[2] The humility which they profess would of itself make it a duty for them to accept this rank.

As to *jurisdiction in the external forum, regular* prelates in exempt orders [3] have this jurisdiction over their subjects. Pastors, on the other hand, do not by reason of their official duties acquire this jurisdiction over their parishioners.

Finally, as far as *jurisdiction in the internal forum* is concerned, the Ordinary of the place [4] has it in his diocese, and the pastor in his parish. [5] Any other priest, whether secular or religious, can validly hear confessions only after having been authorized to do so by the Ordinary of the place.[6] There is one exception to this rule: in an exempt clerical order, the superior can give a priest jurisdiction to hear the confessions of the religious, of novices, and of other persons who live

[1] Canon 499 §1. [2] Canon 491 §2.

[3] Exempt orders (all orders strictly so called, that is, those which have solemn vows; and also, by privilege, certain congregations) are those over which the jurisdiction of bishops is not exercised except in the cases mentioned in the Code (canons 615, 618).

[4] Bishops, vicars-general, etc. Cf. canon 198.

[5] Canon 873.

[6] Canon 874.

night and day in the religious house as provided in canon 514 §1. This, by canon 875.

§III

We have now to say a few words on the work of the regular clergy in the Church.[1] This clergy includes two classes of priests, in addition to such as may belong to the general hierarchy. Those of the first class are, ordinarily at least, employed exclusively in priestly functions, which belong directly to divine worship. Such are certain orders of canons regular, and also the members of the contemplative orders, Benedictines, Carthusians, Cistercians, etc. The second class are those who belong to institutes which have as their aim to work also for the good of souls, such as the orders called *mendicant,* and those which are properly called *orders of religious clerics.* All these institutes supply collaborators and auxiliaries to the ministers of the Church who are charged with the ordinary care of the faithful. This is the work designated by divine Providence for this branch of the regular clergy; and the Supreme Pontiff looks upon and uses it as a reserve corps, for the greatest good of the entire Church. This recalls the well-known vision of Innocent III [2] in which Saint Francis, who was just then petitioning for the approbation of his order, appeared to him holding up the church of the Lateran, which seemed on the point of falling to ruin. In the office of Saint Ignatius, too, the Church puts into the mouth of all her priests this

[1] In this division the author speaks of regulars only, that is, religious who have solemn vows. Analogous distinctions and considerations might, however, be applied also to members of congregations, that is, of institutes which have only simple vows.

[2] Roman Breviary, October 4th.

prayer: "O God, who, by Blessed Ignatius, didst deign to strengthen the Church militant with new auxiliaries." The Church makes every effort to secure the harmonious cooperation of the two branches of the clergy in the work of the sanctification of souls.[1]

[1] Canon 608.

Chapter Three

Various Kinds of Vows of Religion

In order to put this matter in a clearer light it will be profitable to begin a little farther back.

ARTICLE I

THE RELIGIOUS STATE IN GENERAL, AND PARTICULAR INSTITUTES

Following the explanation of Suarez, we must point out several noteworthy differences between the religious state and religious institutes.

I. *The religious state,* if we consider it in its essence, was instituted immediately by Christ Himself. We may say that it is *of divine right,* and that the Church has not the power to abolish it. This, says Suarez, is the opinion held by all sound-thinking Catholics. Saint Francis of Sales adds that the religious state forms part of the *note of sanctity* in the Church, because this characteristic must manifest itself through the exercise of the evangelical virtues in their highest degree, and that is impossible without the existence of the state of perfection.

II. The community or cenobitical life, however, is not essential to the religious state. One can in private

life strive for perfection, and if he bind himself in a permanent manner to the practise of the three evangelical counsels, he may be considered a religious. Such were the ancient ascetics, the anchorets, and the virgins or widows consecrated to God. Yet, as we have already pointed out, it is very hard in private life to practise religious poverty and obedience as perfectly as in communities. For this reason the Church now includes the "life in community" as part of her definition of the religious state, and requires it absolutely as an essential element for religious life strictly so called.[1]

III. Stability in a certain institute or under a certain rule was formerly not required for religious profession. During the early centuries there was but one monastic order, or rather there was none, although there were several rules, which however were variable at the will of superiors. Strictly speaking, there existed only the religious state, without those specific differences which now distinguish the various institutes. It was therefore not necessary that a person become a member of any particular community. It was sufficient that some public manifestation of one's entire consecration to God had been made. One thus belonged to the religious state, and was obliged to persevere in it, without however being subject to any particular monastery or rule, unless one had formally assumed these obligations also. Saint Benedict, in order to put an end to those frequent and pernicious transfers from one monastery to another, established that famous requirement of stability which was thereafter exacted of his religious. It is a very salutary enactment; and it was soon afterward universally approved by the authority of the Church, so that it gave rise to the permanent distinction which now exists between the various institutes.

[1] Canon 487.

ARTICLE II

VARIETY OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTES

Section 1.—Reasons for This Variety

I. The diversity of religious institutes in the Church is not the result of chance, nor yet a fruit of human caprice. Its primary reason is to be found in divine Providence and the interior working of the Holy Ghost in souls.

God, in choosing for each individual on earth a separate destiny, has also given to each one qualities, aptitudes, and tastes which are in accord with that destiny. The diversity of characters, of talents, of inclinations, and even of bodily strength and bodily needs, has its influence in determining the choice of various positions by various individuals in such a way as to conduce to the common good of society and to the ordering of each soul toward its eternal salvation. Now, this disposition of divine Providence is especially manifested in those whom God chooses by a more special vocation for the state of evangelical perfection. It is morally impossible that the aptitudes and propensities of all should accommodate themselves in this state to one and the same mode of life. One feels a greater aptitude for a life of contemplation, mortification, and silence; and is drawn toward it. Another finds an active life better suited to his character and tastes; and the inspirations of grace move him in this direction. A third, considering the gifts that have fallen to his lot, sees in them indications of a call to a life in which action and contemplation may be united. Thus, all will have means of tending to perfection by the exercise of the love of God and the neighbor, but in various ways and in different degrees.

II. Moreover, God, who looks always to the welfare of His Church, knows how to secure it through the control of events by His providence and the action of His Holy Spirit in souls. Since the needs of the faithful are very diverse, one single institute could not supply them all. The divine Goodness has provided for these divers needs by the variety of religious bodies, each one of which is destined in its own measure and in its own way to secure to the Church some spiritual or temporal blessing, and to benefit her children by the relief of spiritual or bodily ills. Institutes therefore, like individuals, have their vocations. Members of the great body of the Church, they each receive, as does each member of the human body, a special assignment,—and by this each must be guided in its work for the universal welfare. Some, living in retirement and solitude, help the Church by their prayers and by their edifying example;[1] others, in closer touch with the world of men, labor to win souls or engage in other works of mercy.

Section 2.—The Three Principal Varieties of Religious Institutes

I. After what we have just said it will be seen that all religious institutes are reduced to three principal kinds, according as they provide for the *contemplative,* the *active,* or the *mixed* life.

To the contemplative class belong especially the purely *monastic* orders because their direct and special purpose is to enable their members to devote their time to prayer and to the exercises which belong to the divine service in the strict sense. In these institutes even work is subordinated and made subservient to

[1] Upon this subject some beautiful pages may be found in the Introduction to Montalembert's, The Monks of the West.

this principal end. Among the contemplatives are the Benedictines, the Carthusians, the Poor Clares, the Carmelites, and others.

The active life is the distinctive feature of many institutes which are devoted to the care of the poor or the sick, or to the instruction and education of children. The orders which formerly existed for the redemption of captives, and the military orders which concerned themselves with the defense of Christianity against the infidels, were also numbered in this class.

Those orders are called mixed, in which contemplation and action are joined and go, as it were, abreast. In this case the religious draws from the exercises of the contemplative life the lights and graces which he needs for himself and the neighbor, whilst through action and especially by priestly ministrations he labors to communicate to others the blessings he has received. Thus by an intimate coordination between his efforts for his own perfection and those for the sanctification of his neighbor, he imitates the life of the Apostles, who said of themselves, "We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."[1] To this class belong the orders of Saint Dominic, of Saint Francis, of Saint Ignatius, and others.

It is appropriate here to make an observation upon religious who are engaged in the active life. They are absolutely in need of borrowing from the contemplative life a due measure of spiritual exercises. Otherwise, immersed as they are in exterior occupations, they would inevitably be in danger of forgetting the demands of their own perfection, or even of neglecting the care of their own personal salvation. This is the trend of the Savior's warning to Martha, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and art troubled

[1] Acts 6, 4.

about many things: But one thing is necessary."[1] The world admires the Sister of Charity and acknowledges the value of her service, and yet it finds fault with her practises of devotion. When it reproaches her with these as if they were so much time lost, it forgets that without them the Sister of Charity would be an impossibility. But on her part, shall she fall a victim to this same gross delusion, or can she ever, by the neglect of her spiritual exercises, behave as though she shared it?

II. If it is desired to compare these three modes of life as regards perfection, here are the principles laid down by Saint Thomas.[2]

The difference between one religious institute and another may be considered in the first place with regard to the specific end of each, and secondly with regard to the means which each employs to reach that end. Hence that institute is, absolutely speaking, the best which has the highest aim. Thus a contemplative order is *in itself* better than an active order. The Lord said to Martha, the sister of Mary, "Mary hath chosen the best part." According to the Fathers, these two sisters are types of the two modes of life. Martha represents the active life in the service of the divine Master, and Mary the contemplative life.

The spirit of the world does not appraise religious institutes according to these standards, and consequently its appraisals of them are false.

There are, however, some works of the active life which flow from the fulness of contemplation. Such are preaching and the care of the sanctification of souls. A life devoted to such works is better than a life of simple contemplation, as it is more perfect to communicate the fruit of one's contemplation to others than to keep it for one's self; better to enlighten others

[1] Luke 10, *41, 42.* [2] $2^a\ 2^{ae}$, q. 188, a. 6.

than to shine in solitude. For this reason, those institutes in which the work of the sanctification of the neighbor is joined to that of one's own perfection, hold the first place in point of excellence. This is the life which the Apostles led, following in this the great model of all perfection, our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

If the aim of various institutes is equally high, their relative preeminence must then be judged by the second standard, the means employed to attain the end. And, since means are ordained not for their own sake but for the sake of the end desired, those observances must be judged the best, not necessarily which are the most rigid and austere, but which are best adapted to the purpose of the institute.

ARTICLE III

THE VOWS OF RELIGION: SOLEMN AND SIMPLE; PERPETUAL AND TEMPORARY

I. The *Catechism of the Vows* explains exactly what is meant by a solemn vow and a simple vow.[1]

It also points out that solemn vows are pronounced only in religious orders strictly so called. This is the essential difference that distinguishes these orders from simple religious congregations. All the members of a religious order in the strict sense do not always make the solemn profession. There are some orders in which certain members are admitted only to the simple vows. These vows, although simple, yet make the persons who take them religious in the strict sense, as Pope Gregory XIII declared in regard to the simple vows of scholastics in the Society of Jesus.[2]

[1] Part I, Chap. III.

[2] According to the actual terminology now in use, which is determined exactly by canon 488, 7°, *religious* are all those who have taken vows in any religious society; *regulars* are those religious who have taken vows (even simple vows) in an order.

It is the mind of the Church at the present time to consider the simple vows taken in religious orders as the normal preparation for the solemn vows; and to consider temporary vows, wherever taken, as an apprentice-ship looking toward perpetual vows. In 1857, Pius IX decreed that in orders of men having only one year's novitiate the solemn profession should be preceded by a trial of three years during which the candidate should have only simple vows. These simple vows, although in themselves perpetual, were to be regarded as annulled by the legitimate dismissal of the subject by the superior of the order. The necessity of spending three years with only the simple vows, before the solemn profession, was extended to those religious women designated in canon law as *moniales,* by Leo XIII in 1902.[1] The Code of Canon Law goes much farther, for it requires that in all religious societies having perpetual vows, these vows must be preceded by a period of at least three years of simple or temporary vows.[2] We retain the two terms for the sake of greater clearness. As a matter of fact the Church accepts as solemn vows none but those that are perpetual. Perpetual vows may also, however, be merely simple. A religious who has temporary vows may be dismissed for grave cause, and is by that very fact released from his vows.[3]

II. Concerning the merit of *perpetual* and *temporary* vows, we must add something to the explanation given in the *Catechism.*

In themselves the perpetual vows are more perfect.[4]

[1] In the decree *Perpensis.*
[2] Canon 574.
[3] Canons 647, 648.
[4] Other things being equal, solemn vows are more perfect than simple vows; by solemn vows one is more firmly anchored in good by rendering acts which are contrary to the vow, more difficult. Such acts would in fact be invalid. (Canon 579).

There is more generosity, more love of God, more filial surrender to Him and confidence in Him, in sacrificing to Him one's whole life at once, than there is in proceeding by stages, not to say by experiments, and reserving in the meanwhile the right to take back one's offering after a time. The perpetuity of the vows, while it acts as a safeguard against instability, does not destroy interior liberty, nor do away with the sad liberty to sin, nor take away the blessed privilege of making very frequently, and with a fervor less sensible perhaps than at the outset, but more seasoned, and more meritorious because it is more conscious of the difficulties, a renewal of one's complete offering, in the same spirit as that of Corneille's heroes, who said: "I would do it again if I had the chance."

But what is more perfect in itself is not always better for all individuals. God leads souls by various routes. For each one, the chief thing is to follow the divine call in good faith and with the aid of an experienced director. A vocation which is in itself of a somewhat lower degree will merit more for a person who makes good use of it, than a more precious treasure will earn for one who fails to make the most of it.

III. "§1. For the validity of any religious profession, it is requisite:

1°. That the person who makes it be of lawful age (sixteen for temporary, twenty-one for perpetual vows);

2°. That the subject be admitted to the profession by the lawful superior according to the constitutions;

3°. That there shall have preceded, a valid noviceship as provided in canon 555;

4°. That the profession be made without violence, or grave fear, or fraud;

5°. That it be expressed in formal terms;

6°. Lastly, that it be accepted according to the con-

stitutions by the lawful superior, acting by himself or through his representative.

§2. For the validity of the perpetual profession, whether solemn or simple, it is requisite, besides, that it shall have been preceded by the simple and temporary profession as provided in canon 574." (Canon 572).

Add to this the conditions for validity which may be prescribed by various religious societies in particular.

IV. The novice-ship to be valid must be made in the house of novices during one entire and continuous year. (Canon 555).

The day of entrance does not count. (Canon 34, §3, 3°). Thus, a novice who entered on October 1, 1922, may not validly take his vows before October 2, 1923. This would be true even though it were a leap year, because it is counted according to the calendar. (Canon 34, §2).

"§1. The novice-ship is *interrupted,* and must be begun anew, and carried on to completion: if a novice has been dismissed by the superior, and has left the house; or if he has left the house without the permission of the superior and with the intention not to return; or, finally, if he has spent outside the house more than 30 days, consecutively or not, for any reason whatever, even with the permission of the superior.

§2. If the novice, with the permission of the superior, or by unavoidable necessity, has remained absent from the house, but under the obedience of the superior, for more than 15 but not more than 30 days, consecutively or not, it is requisite and sufficient for the validity of the novice-ship, that the novice make up the same number of days that he missed; if, under the above named conditions, he has not been absent more than 15 days, then the superior may require that he

make up the time lost, but this shall not be necessary for the validity of the novice-ship." (Canon 556).

ARTICLE IV

THE DESIRE WHICH A RELIGIOUS MAY HAVE TO GO OVER TO ANOTHER INSTITUTE

I. Upon this question in general, here is the doctrine of Saint Thomas:[1]

It is not praiseworthy to pass from one institute to another unless there be some necessity or some noteworthy advantage. The reasons are, first, that those from whom one parts may be scandalized at the change; and secondly, because, other things being equal, one will get along better in that religious society in which one has become accustomed to the service of God, than in any other.

Nevertheless it may be praiseworthy to pass to another institute for any of the three following reasons. The first valid reason would be a love and desire inspired by God, for a more perfect institute. This superiority of one institute over another must be judged not merely by the relative austerity of their observances, but chiefly by comparing the ends at which the two institutes aim, and secondarily by the suitability of the means respectively employed to attain those ends.[2]

The second reason would be the decline of the religious society to which one belongs. If it should fall away from the perfection of its institute, it would be praiseworthy for an individual to change to another, even though it were less strict, in which the rule was better observed.[3]

[1] $2^a\ 2^{ae}$, q. 189, a. 8. [2] Chap. III, Art. II, Sect. 2 §II.

[3] What is said in this Article IV of religious societies, applies to congregations (which were unknown in the time of Saint Thomas) as well as to religious orders. (Cf. canon 488, 1°).

The third reason would be inability on the part of a religious to observe a rule which might be too strict for him, whereas he might be able to observe another which is less severe.

In a case falling under the first class, the religious should, out of humility, ask for permission to leave. This permission, however, may not be refused if the institute to which he desires to go is one of stricter observance. If this be doubtful, he should seek counsel of the superior. Cases of the second class also require that the religious consult the superior. In the third case, however, a dispensation is necessary.

II. This doctrine of Saint Thomas is that of the Church concerning the transit of a religious from one institute to another. We have to add some brief remarks by way of explanation.

1. Taking into account only the natural law, a religious who has made his vows according to one rule, has the right to go over to another that is more perfect. This follows, as we have seen,[1] from the right which a person has, after he has made a vow, to commute it to a better one. Moreover, although God may have been really the author of a first vocation, he remains always the master of His creature; and even though He has settled him in one position, He may later call him to a higher place. Examples of this may be found among some of the saints, for instance in Saint Anthony of Padua, and others.

2. We said, *"taking into account only the natural law,"* because even before the Code, the Church forbade departure from certain orders, and even from certain congregations, to any other institute, at least without formal authorization from the superiors.

The Code of Canon Law, which is on this point stricter than the earlier legislation, has enacted a gen-

[1] Chap. I, Art. III.

eral rule. It requires authorization from the Apostolic See in every case, even for changing to a "stricter" institute.[1] This is a wise precaution against illusions.

3. The desire to go to another institute, even to a more perfect one, is lawful only if it come from God; and it is the duty of the person experiencing it to make sure of this point. Once one is settled in life according to God's will, nothing is more dangerous than the temptation by which the enemy of our salvation assaults our human frailty on this point. "As to those persons who seek to do what is good," says Saint Ignatius, "the devil strives especially to misdirect their good will. Under pretense of simply promoting their good purposes, he suggests the specious appearance of something better, in order to bring the soul around to his own wicked designs." [2]

A matter of this kind therefore requires very special scrutiny. To persuade a person that he has a new call from God, more manifest proofs are needed than those required for a first vocation. If during the whole course of the novitiate no doubt contrary to the existing vocation presented itself, what grounds can the same person now have for supposing that God now demands a change in so important a matter? This is, in our judgment, the ordinary method of determining the question, and an ample reason for rejecting at the outset all thought of change as a dangerous temptation. One case in which the matter might deserve some attention would be if the person at the time of the first vocation knew no other institute than the one then under consideration; or, again, if even at that time there were

[1] Canon 632.

[2] Father Cotel has not quoted literally here; but has given an accurate summary of the fourth rule for the discerning of spirits, for the Second Week. (Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius.)

present some indications which should have been heeded.

4. As to the decline of an institute, as a motive for a change, that would certainly be a legitimate reason, as Saint Thomas declares, if it were unfortunately true, especially if it were the occasion of any danger to the spiritual welfare of the religious person in question. But such relaxation as one may imagine one sees on all sides is not sufficient reason to justify so weighty a decision. A discontented or aggrieved spirit often conjures up what has no existence, or exaggerates slight realities. It fails to make sufficient allowance for human frailty, a thing which will be found wherever men live. It is unfair criticism to lay at the door of an entire institute the blame which belongs to a few particular persons. Finally, even though the religious body itself of which one is a member, be not all that it should be, it is possible that God wishes one to do what some saintly religious have done under similar circumstances, that is, to show one's love for the institute and for one's brethren by doing one's best to remedy the evil according to the grace one has received, even if it be only by the humble protest of a good example.

Seldom therefore is the desire to abandon one's own institute in order to pass to another, praiseworthy or attributable to the inspiration of grace. The thing required by ordinary circumstances, and in general the outstanding duty of a religious, is what we shall now proceed to consider, namely, the esteem and love of his vocation, with an inviolable attachment to the holy state in which he is consecrated to God.[1]

[1] To summarize: 1, the lawful transit to another institute is an exceptional case; 2, even in the rare instances where it is allowed considering the natural law alone, the Church now requires recourse to the Holy See (canon 632).

ARTICLE V

ESTEEM AND LOVE FOR ONE'S VOCATION

I. The Apostle Saint Paul has some beautiful words on this subject. "For see your vocation, brethren," he says;[1] that is to say, have your eyes fixed always upon it, on your own vocation, not on that of some one else. "Let every man abide in the same calling in which he was called."[2] "I beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called."[3]

There are some vocations higher than others; there are institutes which propose to their members a loftier perfection than do others; this is undeniable, as we have seen in the foregoing article. But another principle, no less certain and of greater practical application, is that we must distinguish between two sorts of good, or of perfection,—that, namely, which is derived from the *object,* and that which includes a relation to the *subject.* A thing which is better from a purely objective standpoint, considered quite apart from the person doing the act, is a mere abstraction, a speculation of the mind, void of reality. What is really better, more pleasing to God, more meritorious for man, is that which is subjectively, personally, better. This consists in the combination of two elements: on the one hand the vocation from God, and His grace; on the other, our faithful cooperation with that vocation and grace. In a word, this really better thing consists in the full performance of God's will; and there only can it be found. You aspire to something "better" which God does not want of you, and you neglect the good which He gives you to do! Instead of a real, personal

[1] I Cor. 1, *26.*
[2] I Cor. 7, *20.*
[3] Eph. 4, *1.* In these texts Saint Paul is speaking of the call to Christianity, but what he says is equally true of the religious vocation.

improvement, you will encounter only chagrin and disillusionment. But, on the other hand, when God really invites you to mount higher, if you decline, and persist in remaining where you are, under pretext that that is enough for your ambition, and that anyhow you will be able there to attain to what is personally better for you, that is a want of generosity, an infidelity, a misstep which is full of danger.

II. Here is the sovereign rule in the service of God, our supreme and universal Lord: "To serve God," says Saint Ignatius with admirable vigor and fitness of expression, "is to put one's self at His disposal, so that He may make use of us to the whole extent of His will and good pleasure."[1] The Saint uses the comparison of a *tool* which offers no resistance to the workman, no matter what he wishes to do with it. There is nothing more practical than this luminous maxim, whether for entering upon a state of life or for continuing in it if it has been selected according to God; whether we apply it as a criterion to the position and office, the time and the place, or to each of our actions in detail.

Since we have here touched upon the root-principle of every vocation, let us add one apposite remark.

One often hears people who are on the point of choosing a state of life ask themselves, "Which is the state in which I shall do the most good?" That is not precisely the point. Rather one should ask, "Which is the state in which God wants me to do some good, and for what good does He wish to use me?" That good which God wants of me, be it less than what my imagination pictures, that is the one to which I must bind and apply myself. Such is the essential condition of a servant in relation to his master, and such is the

[1] Spiritual Exercises, Prelude to the Election of a State of Life. Here again the author sums up the spirit of this passage of the Exercises, rather than quotes it literally.

disposition he must always evince. Besides, it is easy to see that these persons, when they speak of doing more good in one state of life, are thinking, usually, only of the good which they will do to others; and, by a manifest illusion, they forget that the first good to be attended to is one's own good, the good of one's soul. Now, this good we cannot hope to do elsewhere than where God promises us His help through a vocation which comes from Himself.[1]

III. This principle once understood, it is easy to draw the practical conclusions.

1. The finest vocation for me is the one which really comes to me from God. The gift which deserves my preference is the one He has deigned to bestow upon me. The position in which I shall do the most good, and especially where I shall attain my own sanctification, is the one which He has seen fit to assign to me.

2. No doubt I must esteem all the institutes which the Spirit of God has raised up and approved through

[1] We do not say that the will of God in regard to every soul is always equally categorical. We must distinguish.

1. If there is question of the religious life in general, many authors admit that all Christians who have no special hindrance are called to it, at least by a remote vocation, which they can generally make proximate and efficacious by prayer and cooperation with grace. Canon 538 favors this view.

2. It is evident that every one is not called indiscriminately to any religious institute. But whereas the will of God is manifested to some souls in a very clear and almost irresistible manner, in the case of others His will is far less imperative, contenting itself with suavely inviting and giving indications of His good pleasure. Sometimes even the soul, feeling no peculiar attraction for any special institute, considers which of them would suit its capabilities; and it is possible that the choice among several or many religious societies may be left to it. Let the soul then decide in favor of the one which, with the help of a reliable director, it shall judge to be best for the glory of God and for its own welfare. After it shall have done its best, it may have full confidence that God's grace will not be wanting. All it need do is to sanctify itself in the career upon which God has at least permitted it to enter, and in which He wants it to persevere.

His Church; but my own institute is the one I must love most, as a child loves its mother more than all other persons, although she be less beautiful or less rich than they.

3. Piety, justice, and charity, oblige me to acknowledge and to praise in all religious bodies the manifold grace of the Holy Ghost, who by this marvelous variety provides for all the necessities of body and soul. But it is no less a part of my duty to acknowledge with an even greater tenderness of gratitude the special grace of my vocation, and all the personal blessings to me, of which it is the well-spring.

4. To foster his esteem and love for his vocation, this is one of the most important duties of every religious. Any one who allows these two great realities to wane in his soul gives proof that he is growing remiss in the fidelity he owes to God. Instead of finding fault with his institute, it will be far better for him to search his own conscience and so by an efficacious reform of his own life return to exact and fervent observance.

Chapter Four

The Virtues Which Form the Object of the Three Vows of Religion

ARTICLE I

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE VOW AND THE VIRTUE

The *Catechism of the Vows* names four differences and gives a sufficient explanation of each one.[1] But it will be profitable to dwell upon certain practical consequences the consideration of which may enhance the diligence of persons consecrated to God.

I. The first difference is that the vow is a *means* toward the attainment of the virtue; and hence we see the inconsistency of those tepid religious who, after having made the vow, come to neglect the practise of the virtue.

To make them more keenly conscious of this fatal incongruity, they should be confronted with the fervent religious which the same vocation has produced. The sight of these examples in their own society will move them powerfully, for it is only by being like these that they can pride themselves on having them for their brothers.

Again, it will be a means of reawakening their spirit to point out to them those saints who, even outside the cloister, rose to such heights in the perfection

[1] Part I, Chap. IV.

of their virtues, even though they were not, as they themselves are, bound by vows to the Lord. Nay, even the thought of the great number of generous souls whom holy Church can always point out to them in the midst of the world, will be to them a source of salutary confusion. Ah! if God had given these fervent Christians a vocation such as theirs, with all its means of sanctification, how perfect would have been their co-operation and fidelity!

Such reflections as these, it is hard to make seriously without being moved by them. Through such reflections a religious will banish the danger which threatens him even in the midst of plenty, that, namely, of becoming so accustomed to God's gifts as to lose his appreciation for them, according to the expression of Saint Augustine,[1] and thus falling into the terrible evil of tepidity and abuse of grace.

II. The second difference between the vow and the virtue is that the vow does not directly extend beyond those things which it requires under pain of sin, whereas the virtue can always mount to an ever higher perfection.

Here too we may draw an important conclusion: it is by the eager desire to increase in virtue from day to day that one becomes a good religious. This truth may be better understood by means of a comparison. In the commandments of God we distinguish a *negative* part, which always obliges under pain of sin, and another part which is called *positive* because while it does not always bind in conscience, it points the way to an ever more perfect observance of the commandment. For example, the first three precepts of the Decalogue, in their negative part forbid under pain of offending God whatever is contrary to the worship we owe Him. But in their positive part they go much

[1] "Assiduitate viluerunt."

higher, since they include all the degrees of perfection in God's service which a true servant of God should strive to attain in that virtue. The same may be said of the other commandments in their own sphere. Now the vows are obligations which a man assumes by a promise made to God. They thus become a kind of personal precept in which may be discerned a positive and a negative part. The former, being the subject of the vow, obliges under pain of sin; the latter is the subject of the virtue, and in this a true religious must tend to an ever greater perfection.

Religious may be divided into three classes. There are *mediocre religious, good religious,* and *saintly religious.* We leave aside a fourth class, namely *bad religious,* because they either are not truly religious at all or are such only to their condemnation, and are in imminent danger of not persevering in the religious life.

To these three classes we may apply what Saint Ignatius says of the three classes of persons who make the spiritual exercises. "The first class amble along at their ease without going beyond narrow limits which they have fixed in advance; others go at the pace of a traveler, who walks with more decision and without prescribing bounds to his journey until he has reached its end; the third class do still better,—they choose to go on the run, because they have made up their minds to go farther and to get there more quickly." [1]

In the same way, the mediocre religious walks at a snail's pace, content to idle along comfortably to and fro within certain bounds. The spirit of faith and of sacrifice are weak and often wanting in him; the rectitude and purity of his intention are often at fault. He

[1] Spiritual Exercises, First Annotation. Father Cotel has here given a somewhat enlarged paraphrase of the text.

observes his rules when they do not cost him too much trouble; he does not act in a manner contrary to virtue as long as its demands upon him are easy; but when any difficulty arises he will often be found wanting.

The good religious has set himself to the springy and resolute stride of a voyager upon his journey, for he has a serious purpose to reach the goal. He is not faultless; but he has some energy in his soul. He has that true devotion of which Saint Thomas speaks, that is, a certain alacrity of will for whatever belongs to the service of God. Hence he not only dreads as a calamity any sin, and any even slight violation of his vows, but moreover he habitually follows the more delicate dictates of virtue. If he stumbles occasionally in a hard place it is only by surprise or through momentary weakness from which he quickly recovers.

And what of the saintly religious? As for him, he races, he would like to fly, on his journey.[1] He repeats after the Apostle, "Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect; but I follow after, if I may by any means apprehend . . . forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth myself to those that are before."[2] Do not imagine, however, that he is a stranger to temptations and difficulties, or free from defects, failings, and even sins. No; this perfect exemption belongs not to the saints in this world. I say more,—and mark this well—the trials God sends them are greater than yours, because He proportions them to their virtue. But what is peculiar to the saintly religious is a singleness of purpose, and hence a strong and constant will to reach God by throw-

[1] "Who will give me wings like a dove and I will fly." Ps. 54, *7*.
"They shall take wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary." Is. 40, *31*.
[2] Philip. 3, *12, 13*.

ing off the shackles of all earthly affections,—a will to make use of everything, even of his faults and defects, to further his advance toward the single object of his love. And his great means of attaining to this end are his vows and rules, together with self-denial and patience, and the spirit of faith, of confidence, and of humility.

After all, fervent communities are not only those in which there are none but saints, nor those in which no fault can be found. Alas, such as these we should look for in vain on this earth. In a good community there are always some mediocre religious, but the good ones are in the majority; may the divine Master be pleased to keep such communities entirely free from bad religious, and also to give them always a few saints!

III. The third difference between the virtue and the vow is that the virtue is in turn a means toward the preservation of the vow, in the sense that a religious will be the more sheltered from any violation of the vow, the more diligent he is in the practise of the virtue. But, on the other hand, when he is notably negligent in the exercise of the virtue, he is surely on the way toward infidelity to the vow. This urgent motive for application to virtue is perfectly developed in Rodriguez.[1]

IV. The fourth difference involves this principle: that a religious can sin against the virtue without violating the vow. From this he must learn two very important truths: first, that every deficiency in regard to poverty or obedience is not necessarily a sin against his vows; and secondly, neither is it always safe to say, "I am not violating my vow; hence there is no sin."

[1] Christian Perfection, Part III, Sixth Treatise, Chaps. 1 and 5.

ARTICLE II

OBLIGATIONS, OTHER THAN THOSE OF THE VOWS, WHICH RESULT FROM RELIGIOUS PROFESSION

The obligations of which we are about to speak flow from the act of self-oblation which, by his profession, the religious makes to the institute in which he pronounces his vows.

Section 1—What These Obligations Are

One who is received as a member of an association, by that very fact contracts obligations toward it: the obligation of stability according to the nature of the relation he has assumed; the obligation of cooperating toward the common good; of following the direction and leadership of those who are legitimately in charge; of maintaining harmony and union with the other members; of loving with a special affection the body, and the members of the body, of which he is a part; finally, the obligation of removing whatever obstacles may present themselves to impede the fulfilment of his duties.

All this is true of any association, and is proportioned to the degree of union which has been established between the members. Still more is it true of associations which are created by the Spirit of God for a spiritual purpose, and consecrated by the approbation of the Church. But the thing that unites the members of a religious body still more closely to one another, is the sacred bond of the vows which they have taken. Each individual is like a stone in the masonry of a building,—a living stone, so incorporated into the living edifice, that if it tried to change its destiny, its place, or its part in the general scheme, it

would compromise not only the beauty but often the very stability of the edifice. A still more complete and expressive comparison may be found in the natural institution of the family. All the relations, the rights and duties which the ties of blood create within the family, the bond of the vows produces within a religious body, because it establishes there a fatherhood, a sonship, and a brotherhood, in the spiritual order.

Now, without dwelling upon other obligations, we may here emphasize two important duties of the religious life. The first is union and fraternal charity; the second is evangelical detachment on the part of the religious, as regards his relatives.

Section 2—The Duties of Religious Brotherhood

I. It is needless to prove that everything which the Gospel says of fraternal charity applies in a special manner to religious brotherhood. By what sign was it that, according to Christ our Lord's wish, His own should be recognized? He has said Himself that it is by the charity existing among the brethren. "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another." [1] And this was in fact the most striking feature of the primitive Church. "The multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul." [2] The pagans, struck by this unaccustomed sight, repeated in amazement, "See how they love one another!"

Unfortunately, before long, as the number of believers increased, charity grew cold in the hearts of some. Hence the era of persecutions had not yet drawn to an end when the Spirit of charity began to raise up those religious institutions in which He de-

[1] John 13, *35*.
[2] Acts 4, *32*.

sired to preserve this sacred fire in its first purity. And whilst the common run of Christians often found it almost beyond their strength to observe the precept of charity in all its strictness, there were a large number of holy places of retirement which were destined to exhibit it to the world perpetually in all its perfection. In these places, what a wealth of means are focused upon the production and maintenance of this blessed result! The very holocaust of the vows,—is it not a sacrifice offered not only to God, but also to one's brethren for the sake of God? May we not say that it is as full of fraternal charity as it is of heavenly love?

How ardently, then, should not every religious strive to nourish in his soul this spirit of charity, and to make this queen of the virtues so blossom within him that its fragrance may diffuse itself from every heart until it pervades the whole community!

II. As an encouragement to good will let us briefly note on the one hand what fraternal charity demands, and on the other what are the things that spoil it.

What it demands above all are humble, gentle hearts. From this well-spring all other blessings flow: disinterestedness, cordiality, mutual esteem and confidence, the delicacy of kind attentions, a practical eagerness to be helpful, and, if need be, the mutual bearing of defects and the prompt and entire forgetfulness of mutual wrongs.

What spoils charity and union between brothers is above all else selfishness, with its icy distinction between *mine* and *thine,* as Saint Chrysostom has it.[1] To come down to details, it is the putting forth of pretensions, haughty behavior; jealousies, impatience, rudeness and harsh speech; brazen bad manners, or touchiness, pouting, and rancor; antipathies and estrangements, or special preferences and exclusive

[1] "Meum et tuum, frigidum illud verbum."

friendships; the spirit of curiosity and the affectation of nicety; suspicions, distrust, talebearing; finally, it is the inclination to criticize, the desire to argue, the tendency to singularity in one's views, the fondness for teasing and making fun of one's brethren.

Here we have an enumeration, under two aspects, of the things which, because of the imperfections of our nature, have a bearing on the meritorious, daily, and almost hourly practise of fraternal charity. To hearten ourselves for this unremitting task we have an abundance of motives; but it will be enough to recall here the words of the great Apostle, "He that loveth his neighbor hath fulfilled the law." [1]

III. Closely connected with fraternal charity are *edification* and *mutual esteem.*

1. A religious who really loves his brethren will show it especially by inclining them to welldoing through the example of his regularity; he will allow himself to do nothing which might disedify them. It is bad enough to commit faults one's self, and even slight ones if they be deliberate, do considerable harm to a religious person; but the evil is much greater when he causes his brethren to commit them, for he thus virtually places his brethren upon a dangerous incline, and runs the risk of pushing them farther than he thinks. Shall we not, each one of us, have enough to account for to the supreme Judge? Must we add to the account the failings into which others shall have been drawn by our words and actions? A religious should conceive an extreme aversion toward whatever on his part might disedify his brethren. This was Saint Paul's attitude, and in what strong terms he expressed it! [2]

[1] Rom. 13, *8.*

[2] "But take heed lest perhaps this your liberty become a stumbling block to the weak. . . . Now when you sin thus against your brethren and wound their weak conscience, you

2. As to the *mutual esteem* which religious persons owe to one another, listen to the words of the same Apostle, speaking of it to the first Christians: "Love one another with the charity of brotherhood, with honor preventing one another";[1] and again: "Let each esteem others better than themselves."[2] These beautiful words express perfectly the duties of religious brotherhood. Among brothers there should be love, cordiality, and a certain easy intimacy which is not shown toward others; but among brothers who are united in God's service, there must be added to these other relations the quality of respect. All owe one another that mutual regard and that reciprocity of honor which, in the first place, the dignity of their profession demands, and which moreover should be dictated by one's solicitude to recognize in each one of his brethren the image and person of our Savior Jesus Christ Himself.

This brotherly esteem should have two distinguishing features: first, it should exist rather in genuine interior sentiments and in actions than in exterior forms; secondly, it should be marked by religious simplicity.

If you would make brotherly love actual and practical, be humble. Your acts of deference to others will then not be empty demonstrations, as are too often those of worldly people. You will then, according to the teaching of the Gospel, aspire always to the lowest rather than to the highest place,[3] and will desire the worst things in the house rather than the best. It would be easy to multiply applications; but we may say it all in a few words: you will then avoid those thousand

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sin against Christ. Wherefore if meat scandalize my brother, I will never eat flesh, lest I should scandalize my brother." I Cor. *8, 9, 12, 13.*

[1] Rom. 12, *10.*

[2] Philip. *2, 3.*

[3] "Sit down in the lowest place." Luke 14, *10.*

little subterfuges of self-love, which is always engrossed in self, always in quest of preferences and privileges.

As to the outward expression of fraternal regard, the members of a religious community must try assiduously to become perfectly polite and well-mannered toward one another. Nothing would be less becoming in them than rusticity and the want of good breeding. Yet their politeness must be of a modest sort, their acts of deference quite simple; only then will their conduct be really charitable, and truly give pleasure and edification. Religious should therefore banish as unworthy of their profession all out-of-the-way formality, all affected compliments, and whatever smacks of the pretentiousness and exaggeration of worldly manners.

Section 3—Evangelical Detachment in Regard to Relatives

Nothing is more explicitly laid down in the Gospel than the duty of detachment from relatives on the part of those whom God calls to the religious state. The divine Master even requires us to part from them in order to belong entirely to His service and to give ourselves completely to this high vocation. Intending to make the soul of a religious His own spouse in quite a special way, He desires her to apply to herself what is written of the conjugal state, "A man shall leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife";[1] and He addresses to her those words of the Psalm, "Hearken, O daughter, and see, and incline thy ear: and forget thy people and thy father's house. And the King shall greatly desire thy beauty; for He is the Lord thy God."[2]

[1] Gen. *2, 24.*
[2] Ps. *44, 11, 12.*

By way of showing at once the rightness, the duty, and the practise of this evangelical detachment, we shall make special reference to the principles relating to it as given by Saint Thomas. They are also those of holy Church, and those of right reason enlightened by God.

§I. What is the Nature and Extent of Filial Duty?

By the natural law, a son owes to his father and mother an essential, and an accidental duty.

Considering his parents as the principles of his existence and hence as his natural superiors, a son owes them by the natural law the essential debt of *honor*, according to those words of the law, "Honor thy father and thy mother."[1] From this fundamental obligation flow his other duties: love, respect, obedience, service.

The accidental content of filial duty includes whatever special circumstances may require in a son's conduct toward his parents. For example, if they are poor, sick, or deprived of liberty, he must honor them by helping them by every means in his power. This duty to help them admits of no excuse, provided assistance be necessary and possible.

On the other hand, parents, since they are the principles of their child's existence, have the essential duty toward him of providing for his needs, not only for a time, but all his life, or at least until they shall have put him in a position to help himself.

From these principles it follows: first, that it is not lawful for a father or mother to abandon their children even for the purpose of consecrating themselves to God in the religious state, without having provided for their future; secondly, that a son may not leave

[1] Exod. 20, 12.

his father or mother in *grave* need in which he alone can help them, in order to follow any career which would put such help beyond his power. If parents are in *extreme* need, that is if their lives are in danger, a son, though he be already a religious, is bound to come to their aid even though it require him to leave the religious state, provided he cannot otherwise assist them. In the case of a necessity which is grave but not extreme, it is more probable according to theologians that he is not obliged, and even that he is not permitted to quit the religious state; but he is bound to use, consistently with the obedience he owes to his superiors, all the means at his command to minister to the need of his parents.

§II. Is One Required by the Virtue of Religion to Omit the Duties of Filial Piety?

Here is the answer of the Angelic Doctor.[1]

Religion and filial piety are two distinct virtues. Now no virtue can be contrary to another, because good is never contrary to good. It is therefore impossible that religion and filial piety should be so opposed that the act of one should forbid the act of the other. But an act of any virtue has always its limits, fixed by right reason; if it transgress these bounds it is no longer an act of virtue, but a wrong. So it is with filial piety; its limits, fixed by reason and justice, would evidently be exceeded if a son should wish to love his father more than God. If my father incites me to evil, or tries to draw me away from the service which God wants of me, it becomes my duty not to acquiesce in his will upon this point; but as the Apostle says, "much more must we obey the Father of spirits,

[1] 2^a 2^{ae}, q. 101, a. 4; q. 189, a. 6.

and live."[1] This is also the sense of the words of our Lord in the Gospel, "He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me."[2]

The first application of these principles is in the case where parents would wish to draw their child away from the service of God in things of obligation, or to expose him to occasions which are perilous for his soul's salvation.

But they apply also to the case where a child feels that he is really called by Almighty God to the religious state. Saint James and Saint John are praised in the Gospel for having left their father in order to follow Christ. It was not that their father was inciting them to sin; but as he was able to get along as regards his temporal life, his sons saw no reason which should prevent them from responding to the call of the Savior.

A child may, after he has attained lawful age, enter the religious state even against the will of his parents; for he is then in possession of liberty of choice in regard to his state of life, and surely this liberty exists especially in regard to a state in which God is more perfectly served.

Our Lord in the Gospel[3] reproved a disciple who wanted to put off his response to His call, under pretext of going first to bury his father. According to Saint Chrysostom, there were others at hand to fulfil this filial duty. According to Saint Cyril, the man was asking permission to remain with his old father until his death, a request which the Savior declined to grant for the reason that there were other persons who were obliged by their filial relations to perform this service.

[1] "We have had fathers of our flesh for instructors, and we reverenced them: shall we not much more obey the Father of spirits and live?" Heb. 12, *9.*

[2] Matt. 10, *37.*

[3] Matt. 8, *21, 22.*

But, some one may say, to honor one's parents is a duty imposed by precept, whereas to enter religion is only a matter of counsel, and consequently is left to the free choice of a Christian soul.

I answer in the first place that the precept of honoring one's parents refers not only to corporal but also to spiritual services. Religious persons can therefore perfectly well fulfil this precept by their prayers, their respect, and even by their good offices, as far as befits their profession. Even persons living in the world are not always obliged to honor their parents by material services; they do it in various ways according to their state and condition in life.

In the second place, I answer that a vocation to the religious state is not a matter which is left entirely to the free discretion of a Christian. Although, generally speaking, it is only a matter of counsel, still, as a matter of fact, salvation not infrequently depends upon it; and were it only to render this more easy or more secure, those whom God calls are most deeply interested in not being deaf to His voice. Now, according to the principles of the Gospel, parents may not, for their mere whim, or even for their temporal advantage, require that their children give up such an interest as this. Nay, more,—if a marked predilection draws a child toward the religious state, and if, as often happens, he has at stake the happiness of his whole life even temporally, by what right would parents dare claim to oppose his choice, and to prefer their own interest to the paramount welfare of their child even in this life?

§III. The Love of a Religious for His Parents

The world sometimes accuses the religious state of curtailing the fourth commandment of God and of

smothering the love of parents in the hearts of religious. Without forgetting the answers already given, let us examine this charge in relation to a religious who is faithful to the duties of his state.

Doubtless such a one belongs to that class to whom our Lord addressed those words: "If any man come to Me, and hate not his father and mother, . . . yea and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple." [1] But who spoke these words which are apparently so harsh? Was it not the divine Author of the commandment Himself? And here is the interpretation which, with Saint Ignatius, we must place upon them: "Hence the religious man must take care to put off all carnal affection to his kindred, and change it to that which is spiritual; loving them with that love only which well-ordered charity requires, so that being dead to the world and to self-love, he may live only to Christ our Lord, and have Him in place of parents, brothers, and all things whatsoever." [2]

We see then that it is not love of parents which religious profession curtails; on the contrary, it would make this more genuine, more pure, more real, by clearing it of sensual affection which is what too often spoils it. And because the religious owes the fulness of his affections to Jesus Christ to whom he has entirely consecrated himself, religious profession would have him strip himself of that false love of parents which is nothing but the love of the world or of self, and which would drag him back to the midst of the world and entangle him in worldly affairs and earthly interests.

The love of parents on the part of a religious is therefore no longer characterized by certain acts which are incompatible with the perfect service which he

[1] Luke 14, *26*.
[2] Summary of the Constitutions, 8.

owes to God. Nevertheless this love still occupies the place assigned to it by well-ordered charity, that is, the first place after the love of God. It is more solid and generous than that with which the world is satisfied; and especially is it more advantageous to the parents, because it looks first to their essential welfare, the welfare of their souls.[1]

[1] We add nothing to what the Catechism briefly notes regarding the duties of novices. Superiors will find an explanation of this matter in the "Traité de l'état religieux," by Father Gautrelet, Part I, Section II, Chaps. II and III.

PART II

THE THREE VOWS OF RELIGION IN PARTICULAR

The second part of the *Catechism of the Vows* seems to us to require much less explanation than the first, because it contains, not principles so much as applications thereof, and these are already set down in the text. Besides, if details are desired they are abundantly supplied by books which may be put in every one's hands, such as Rodriguez' *Christian Perfection, L'Homme religieux,* by Father Saint-Jure, and others.

Chapter One

Religious Poverty

ARTICLE I

TWO PRINCIPLES RELATING TO EVANGELICAL POVERTY

Section 1—Evangelical Poverty Attacks Cupidity, Which Is the Primary Foe of Salvation and Perfection

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." [1] This, as every Christian knows, is the first of the eight beatitudes proclaimed by Jesus Christ, the beatitude of voluntary poverty.

This blessed poverty to which the Gospel promises

[1] Matt. 5, *3.*

the kingdom of heaven, consists essentially in keeping one's heart free from attachment to temporal goods. Even the rich must have this detachment in its lowest degree, in order to merit eternal life.

In a higher degree, and with greater merit, it belongs to those who accept and suffer in a Christian spirit actual privation of the gifts of fortune, when such is God's will and the disposition of His providence.

But it shines in its highest degree and with the most exalted merit in those generous souls who voluntarily renounce the good which they possess and the wealth which they might acquire, in order to focus all their aspirations upon the treasures of eternity. To these Christ declares that the kingdom of heaven is already theirs, that they have purchased it in advance, and that they have become its rightful owners in very deed by the voluntary sacrifice which they have made.

Now, why is poverty of spirit the first means which man must make use of, either to win heaven or to attain perfection? We have already given the answer,[1] but it will be well to repeat it. It is because this poverty is the cure for that one of our spiritual ills which is the root of all the others, according to those words of the Apostle, "For the desire of money is the root of all evils." [2] This is why the Savior of men not only begins His preaching with it, but begins His life by giving in His own person the first lesson in poverty from the stable and the crib. And when He wishes to teach us the secret and the way of perfection, He tells us again that this is the starting-point. "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." [3] The first to receive this great lesson and to try to practise

[1] Part I, Chap. II, Art. IV, Sect. 1.
[2] I Tim. 6, *10*.
[3] Matt. 19, *21*.

it in its full extent, were the Apostles. They in turn imparted it to the fervor of the primitive Church, and thus impressed upon religious communities the form of perfect poverty.[1]

If, then, the soul is to be made free to raise itself to God and to cleave to Him, cupidity is the first foe that must be attacked; for this enemy places in the way of charity an obstacle which arms and reinforces all her other enemies, riches being as it were the nutriment and the tool of all our passions. Hence the anathema pronounced against the rich;[2] hence the names applied to riches: deceitfulness, thorns and briers which choke the good seed,[3] lime in which souls stick and are held captive, pitch whose very touch defiles the hands.

Section 2—Poverty is the Wall of Religion

This is the second principle which must be insisted on. God grant that religious be convinced of and forever penetrated with its importance.

Poverty is very appropriately called *the wall of religion.*

The wall, that is to say the *foundation;* and also the *main wall* of the entire edifice; and finally, the *wall of defense,* the *rampart.*

The wall *of religion,* that is, of that *state of perfection* in which one should belong entirely to God and to His service. We must understand this of the *entire religious body,* and of *each religious house,* and of *each individual religious.*

I. Poverty is the *foundation wall* upon which rest the two other virtues which are essential to the religious state, chastity and obedience. For these, poverty

[1] Cf. Rodriguez, Part III, Third Treatise, Chap. 4.
[2] "Woe to you that are rich." Luke 6, *24.*
[3] "The deceitfulness of riches choketh up the word." Matt. 13, *22.*

is a moral necessity; without it, it is extremely difficult to be and remain perfectly chaste, humble, and obedient,—a truth which is proved by the example of most of the rich people in the world. More surely still is poverty the foundation upon which charity must rest; for, as we pointed out in speaking of cupidity, that vice is the chief foe to charity.

II. Poverty is also the *main wall* of the whole edifice, which chastity and obedience must furnish and adorn. That spiritual edifice is either a religious order, a religious house, or the religious life of an individual.

See the radical difference between what takes place in religion and in the world. There, if a business organization is to be formed, those who are interested begin by ascertaining what funds they can contribute to the capital of the enterprise. So too when there is question of settling down in life and getting married, the material resources of the two parties to the engagement are the first subject of inquiry. Finally, to erect a material building, money is needed. "Which of you," says our Lord, "having a mind to build a tower, doth not first sit down and reckon the charges that are necessary, whether he have wherewithal to finish it?" [1]

But on the contrary, if it is a question of founding a religious society or house, the money, the capital which is indispensable, is holy poverty. Without this, God and His Church will not acknowledge them.[2] Does some one wish to "settle down" in religion? The first thing he must do is to strip himself of his goods;

[1] Luke 14, *28*.

[2] Religious, however, are not pure spirits, and it would be imprudent to count habitually upon miracles of Providence, frequent though these are in behalf of religious houses. Hence holy Church wisely forbids the establishment of a religious house unless it be prudently foreseen that it will not be without means of support. (Canon 496).

and in order to erect within himself the edifice of a spiritual life, he must moreover remain poor, and forever. "So likewise," says the Savior,[1] "every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be My disciple" in the religious state.

And yet, some one may say, are not temporal resources also necessary for religious societies? Must not a person live, though he be in the religious state? Yes, of course, that at least which is essential to the life of the body must be supplied. And hence religious are told: "Be poor, genuinely and voluntarily, keep holy poverty faithfully, and God will feed you. He has promised it: 'Seek ye first," says He, 'the kingdom of God, and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you.'[2] Without the fulfilment of this condition, the divine promise does not apply to you." It is for this reason too that when evangelical poverty declined in religious houses they fell into decay, and God and man together put them out of existence, God making use of the injustice of men for the accomplishment of His just designs. Although a few material buildings here and there continued to exist, they were no longer true religious houses, they no longer sheltered true religious. In place of those genuine vocations which had been so numerous in the days of fervor, none now entered but persons of worldly spirit and affections. They came in order to devour the goods of religion, and they put the final touches to the preparation of its utter ruin.

III. Holy poverty is the *wall of defense* of religion. "Poverty," says Saint Ignatius, "is for religious orders a buttressed wall which will preserve them in their state, keep up their discipline, and protect them against a host of enemies; and this explains the efforts the

[1] Luke 14, *33.* [2] Matt. 6, *33.*

devil makes to break down this rampart by every means in his power." [1]

It is a defense against *the world,* whose "errors, loves, and fears," says Saint Augustine, fail to reach the person who has embraced voluntary poverty. Such a person, by stripping himself of the goods of this world, has escaped from its seductions, its allurements, its distractions, its worries, and all its troubles.

It is a bulwark against *the devil,* for, as Saint Gregory says, "Satan assaults in vain those who are voluntarily poor; he is fighting against athletes who are unencumbered with clothing," [2] and who give him no hold.

It is a barrier against *the flesh* itself, in spite of the vantage this enemy has in maintaining its position within us. For what is it that the three-fold concupiscence feeds upon? It is riches, for money obtains everything in this world, pleasures, honors, comfort. Now, as we have seen, religious poverty not only excludes wealth but banishes the very desire of wealth from the heart. If poverty remain intact it is impossible that the religious individually, or even the community, should harbor the design of hoarding. The poor are always with us to receive the surplus, according to the will of God. And thus religious poverty tempers the pleasures and enjoyments of life in food, clothing, the furnishing of houses, and all else. It leaves what is necessary and proper, and this is regulated and sanctified by obedience, so that the life is at bottom one of penance and sacrifice, in which holy poverty ever holds sensuality in check. Pride also is but ill at ease with poverty; for poverty wins no adulation from the world, nor any of the things that flatter human vanity; on the contrary, it enables the heart

[1] Constitutions, Part X, §5.
[2] Homil. 31 in Evangel.

naturally to keep itself in interior humility and modesty.

IV. It is therefore true that poverty is a defense behind which every religious and the whole body of religion is sheltered from all enemies. Consequently, as long as this wall remained solid and intact, religious orders came down the centuries without suffering any harm; and on the other hand, in those which did decline, the trouble came through openings made in this rampart. It is for this reason that all the holy founders have erected it around their structure, that all their worthy successors and all true religious have left nothing undone to maintain and protect it, that all the holy reformers began their work by repairing the gaps that had been made in this wall. And for the same reason, to quote Saint Ignatius once more, "the enemy of the human race never fails to attack this fortification and defense in order to try to weaken it by modifying the regulations which the first founders have wisely made, and introducing innovations which are not at all in accord with the original spirit." Applied to the past, these words, alas, recall the causes of a long and sad story. Religious houses, whole religious orders, which had given to the world so many saints, fell, through forgetfulness of holy poverty, into laxity which in some cases amounted even to corruption. At last when these weakened bodies were already in an advanced stage of decay, violence came to put them out of existence and to throw their pernicious wealth as a sop to wicked men.

To sum up: poverty is the *wall* of religion, both for the entire body and for its members; it is the support and safeguard of the religious spirit, of every religious vocation, of all religious virtue, and of every religious community. With holy poverty religious will easily be humble, chaste, obedient, mortified, gentle, united by

the bond of fraternal charity, devoted to their vocation. Religious communities which are firmly set upon this foundation will always be examples of regularity and edification. On the other hand, without holy poverty, all is endangered; any wound to poverty inevitably brings on relaxation, decadence, and ruin.

From this whole consideration of poverty Saint Ignatius draws the conclusion that "poverty as the wall of religion must be loved because of the esteem we have for it, and must be maintained in all its purity." [1] Esteem alone, or affection alone, does not suffice; there must be a love based on esteem, *diligenda est;* for as one cares little to preserve what one does not love, so one is in danger of not loving with sufficient constancy that which the judgment does not prize at its true worth. But, moreover, if this love be well rooted deep in the soul, it will blossom out in works. One will avoid all infractions on one's own part, and will do all in one's power to oppose whatever would alter the first purity of poverty in one's institute. Very misguided, very guilty, and very much an enemy to his community and to himself, would that religious be who would demolish or allow others to demolish that wall which is the foundation, the body, and the defense of religion.

ARTICLE II

THE VOW OF POVERTY

The vow of poverty is, as we have already observed,[2] the first of the three vows which the state of perfection requires. And, as we have also pointed out,[3] this vow is pronounced by religious for the purpose of more effectively putting to rout cupidity, which is the chief foe to charity in the hearts of men.

[1] Constitutions, Part VI, c. 2.
[2] Part I, Chap. II, Art. IV.
[3] Part II, Chap. I, Art. I.

Section 1—This Vow Considered in the Religious Who Makes It

§I. Nature and Subject-matter of the Vow of Poverty

This vow of religion may have two degrees. The one, more complete and perfect, consists in proscribing not only the exercise but the right of ownership, so that the religious can no longer possess anything in his own name nor acquire anything for himself, either by gift, will, or even by lawful succession. He may, however, even with such a vow, accept a legacy or gift, with the consent of the superior, not for himself, but for the community. In some orders this same vow is subject also to the reservation that the religious may acquire property in the three ways above mentioned, personally, but with the obligation of getting rid as soon as possible of whatever goods he may thus receive, and of applying them to some pious use.

The other degree of the vow of poverty, lower and less perfect, leaves to the religious the naked title to his property, and takes from him only the right to dispose of it independently of the control of superiors. Since such a vow forbids him all acts of ownership, it banishes all disorderly attachment to wealth, forestalls the dangers that might accompany its use, and gives him an opportunity to practise detachment through dependence.

As a matter of fact, many religious do retain the mere title to their property. This is true of all religious who have simple vows, "unless," says canon 580, §1, "the constitutions provide to the contrary,"—an exception which is comparatively rare. It is only at the moment of pronouncing the solemn vows that the professed renounce their property and give up even the right of ownership. (Canons 581 and 582.) The

Holy See has at times dispensed from this obligation. The prudence of holy Church, heightened by long experience, has shown that there are some considerable advantages in not requiring, or even permitting, complete renouncement in the case of all religious. In the first place, should they ever quit the religious state, they will thus have wherewith to live without undergoing the temptations of want, or becoming a charge upon the communities to which they belonged. Moreover, in case of persecutions, dispersion, or confiscation, they will be able to meet the first necessities of the situation, and pave the way for future restorations. This wise foresight, far from diminishing the love of poverty on the part of religious, should urge them to make up for the want of an actual renouncement, which their generosity would fain have made more complete, by a correspondingly higher perfection of interior detachment.

The provisions of the Code concerning the administration of the goods of religious, their last wills, and other related matters, have been sufficiently indicated in the *Catechism of the Vows*.[1] Such religious societies as may be privileged by special indults to depart in some particular from these general laws, should advise their novices of this fact.

§II. Violations of the Vow of Poverty

The *Catechism* explains the instances in which one violates this vow, and shows that permission is required in order to dispose of temporal goods. There are other cases discussed by moral theologians, but upon which we do not deem it profitable to enter here. Some points of more frequent application may, however, be mentioned.

[1] Nn. 43 sq., and 58.

1. Do the manuscripts of a religious come within the vow of poverty? This question has been disputed for centuries. On July 13, 1913, the following query was put to the Sacred Congregation of Religious: "If a religious has, during the time of his profession, prepared a manuscript, has he such a right of ownership in it that he may give it or pass the title to it to another person?" The answer was No.

According to reliable commentators we may deduce from this answer the following conclusions. A religious would sin against his vow of poverty (and against justice toward his community) if he were to alienate without permission any manuscript which had a real value; but he would not sin if he were to destroy the manuscript, unless he had been specially assigned the work of preparing it. In the case of manuscripts which have no value (personal notes, aids to memory, etc.) a religious may dispose of them as he pleases. (We are here considering the matter solely from the point of view of poverty and justice. It stands to reason that if the giving or lending of certain notes should constitute an offense against obedience, charity, or any other virtue, it would be forbidden on other grounds than those now under discussion, and superiors might well object to it.)

2. Eating or drinking without permission at the homes of outsiders is not only a breach of discipline but also a real, though usually slight, violation of the vow of poverty, which forbids receiving anything on one's own warrant. Permission may sometimes be presumed according to the intention of the superior.

3. Similarly the vow does not allow a religious to give away without permission what the community provides for his personal use or maintenance, such as a garment, a portion of his food, and so on; unless

legitimate custom has sanctioned it as a general practise.

4. A religious who, without having permission, would refuse to accept a salary due him for work done, would sin against his vow of poverty, and even against justice toward his community, because the latter has already a right in the premises by virtue of the principle that whatever a religious acquires belongs to his monastery.[1]

5. As to a deposit which a religious might accept for safekeeping as a favor to some one, he does not violate his vow by such an act, provided it be understood that he does not assume the responsibility of a *depositary,* which would require him to make good the property in case of loss. Still, even with this precaution, the rule very wisely forbids the acceptance of any deposit without permission.

Section 2—The Influence of the Vow of Poverty Upon the Poverty Which Is Common to the Whole Institute

There are in the religious state two distinct kinds of poverty which depend upon the vow. One is *personal* to the religious individually, and it is this one chiefly which is treated in the *Catechism of the Vows.* The other is *common* to the entire body, and concerns the religious of an institute collectively. Of this we now have to speak.

I. The poverty common to the religious body is not the same in all institutes. The rule of each institute adapts it to its own peculiar end. The strictest is that which forbids to the community itself the right to own immovable property, by which is meant any property

[1] This principle applies in its fulness only after the solemn vows; but it always applies to the product of the labor of a religious. (Catechism of the Vows, n. 47, 4.)

of such a nature as to produce returns or revenues which may secure the support and maintenance of the religious. Such was once the corporate poverty in all those orders which are called *mendicant* because the religious are supposed to have as their only means of subsistence the alms of the faithful, and these alms are not to be converted into capital for the permanent support of the community. This poverty, however, does not exclude the possession of a religious house, with its church and grounds, except in the orders of the Friars Minor and Capuchins, where even these three things do not belong to the community but remain under the control of the donor or of the church.

A poverty of this kind does, of course, add a great deal to the perfection of personal poverty. Since it prevents the community from owning immovable property and the revenues that might thence be derived, it indirectly affects the individual members, who are thus deprived of any assured means of subsistence. This is for each religious a most meritorious act of surrender to God's providence, and of faith and trust in the promise of the divine Master. That promise will never fail, as long as they themselves fulfil the condition He has laid down: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you." [1]

II. The Council of Trent [2] for wise reasons authorized all mendicant orders except the Friars Minor and the Capuchins (whose founder, Saint Francis, was so attached to holy poverty), to own thereafter funded property common to the whole order. Hence several institutes which were mendicant are no longer such in fact, although the Church in consideration of their primitive rule still honors them with the name and with

[1] Matt. 6, *33*.
[2] Sess. XXV, c. 3.

the privileges attending it. The only ones which declined to take advantage of this concession on the part of the Council were the Discalced Carmelites and the Society of Jesus for its professed houses.

III. As regards the *perfection of common poverty,* Saint Thomas [1] distinguishes between monastic orders, mendicant orders, and those whose office it is to practise the corporal works of mercy. For, as he says, the most perfect poverty is not necessarily the strictest, but that which is best adapted to the ends of the institute. Thus in monastic orders it is well to have as a common possession sufficient assured means of subsistence. Otherwise it would be necessary to raise the means somehow, a task which could not but be detrimental to the contemplative life which is the purpose of these orders. Saint Ignatius reached the same conclusion regarding those of his sons who are in their studies in seminaries and colleges; hence the Society of Jesus belongs to the mendicant orders only through its professed houses.

As for those institutes whose end it is to practise the corporal works of mercy, the perfection of their poverty cannot consist in excluding common resources, since these are necessary for the service of the neighbor, the work which is theirs by vocation.

IV. One more observation concerning common poverty. Such a poverty as subjects religious to a more complete dependence on superiors will be actually more meritorious, through obedience, than a more austere practise which might involve more of suffering but less of dependence. It will also more effectively develop perfect detachment, in which the merit and perfection of poverty chiefly consist. For example, in a community which is supposed to live only upon alms, if superiors should leave to each individual the free use

[1] $2^a\ 2^{ae}$, q. 188, a. 7.

of such gifts as he might receive, would not the spirit of poverty be in much greater peril than it would be in a house which has assured means of support, but where everything down to the slightest detail was regulated by obedience?

Finally, let us say for the consolation of many souls that there are, especially in these days, many religious communities which, although they have not by virtue of their constitutions the same common poverty as the mendicant orders have, still live that same poverty in practise, with the same merit of surrender to the divine Goodness which takes care of those who have left all in order to seek the kingdom of God and His justice.

ARTICLE III

THE VIRTUE OF POVERTY

The virtue of poverty is not explicitly enumerated among the moral virtues; but it is an evangelical virtue which, by detaching the heart from temporal goods, calls for the practise of nearly all the moral and theological virtues. More directly it is connected with liberality and temperance. How highly it was esteemed even by the pagan philosophers is well known. We may content ourselves with citing the words of Cicero, "There is nothing more honorable and magnificent than the contempt of worldly wealth." [1]

The *Catechism of the Vows* has a sufficient explanation of this matter, but a few remarks may here be added.[2]

[1] "Nihil honestius magnificentiusque quam contemnere pecuniam."

[2] It is plain that mere material poverty is not a virtue. The virtue which Christ declared blessed is above all "poverty of spirit," that is, interior detachment. It is in order to attain this that religious bind themselves to actual poverty. Thus understood, is poverty strictly speaking a virtue? Opinions

I. *Unruly affection for temporal objects and belongings.*

Cupidity is so lively a passion that it needs to be constantly watched and repressed in the human heart. Would to God that no religious, whoever he be, might ever forget this fact of experience! Though this inclination is held in check by the vow, it is not extinguished; when there is question of satisfying it, it becomes extremely fertile in subtleties and pretexts. Not infrequently, even after great sacrifices such as religious renunciation, it attaches itself to mere nothings, and seeks in these trifles the satisfaction which it has relinquished in greater things. Now,—and this is a point which a religious must notice—the tempter who stirs up our cupidity cares little what its object be; what he wants and is content with is the unruly affection; and so he tries to attach the heart at first to trifles, in order to bring on little by little more serious disorders.

II. *Superfluities.*

The things which deserve to be called by this name in religious communities will necessarily vary by more or less obvious differences according to the ends of the various institutes. It is therefore not within the province of individuals to decide this question merely upon

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differ. Some say: just as persons are not attached to wealth for its own sake, but rather through pride, or sensuality, or some other vice, so, to be detached from wealth is not in itself an act of virtue, but rather it is a means of practising some other virtues such as humility, penitence, or the like. According to this view, poverty having no proper object of its own would not be a special virtue. We do not wish to take sides in the discussion. But it seems right that if, following the older editions of Father Cotel's work, mention is made of sins against the virtue of poverty, this should be understood, not of sins against a virtue which may be non-existent (in which case the sins would not exist either), but rather of sins either against the vow or against other obligations. Sometimes it may be a question simply of imperfect dispositions.

their own judgment. In this respect matters are usually defined by the rule, or by the declarations of superiors, or by lawful custom, and it is the duty of every religious to conform faithfully to these standards.

III. *Private stocks* and similar exemptions relating to the use of temporal goods.

We must distinguish two sorts of *"peculia,"* or private stocks. One is a real violation of the vow of poverty, because it amounts in fact to an independent use of temporal goods. The other is not absolutely contrary to the vow because it remains subject to the will of superiors. The *peculium* which is forbidden by the vow would occur where a superior would grant the permission and at the same time give up his right to recall it; or would give a permission which was invalid because contrary to the constitutions. But even the *peculium* which does not go so far as to violate the vow, is a bane to religious communities; it blights not only the spirit of poverty but also fraternal union and edification. Here we may well apply the reproach which Saint Paul addressed to the Christians of Corinth, who disregarded the rules that were laid down for the holy gatherings of the faithful in the early Church. "When you come therefore together into one place, . . . one indeed is hungry and another is drunk. . . Do ye put them to shame that have not? What shall I say to you? Do I praise you? In this I praise you not." [1]

For fuller details on the subject of the *peculium,* superiors may consult the treatise of Father Gautrelet on the religious state.[2]

IV. *The distribution of the temporal goods of which the religious must rid himself before his solemn profession.*

Our Lord Jesus Christ said in His Gospel, in estab-

[1] I Cor. 11, *20-22.*
[2] "L'état religieux," Vol. 2, pp. 150-160.

lishing the form of the religious life, "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give to the poor." [1] It is obvious therefore that the evangelical counsel of religious poverty extends even to the disposal of the goods of which one strips one's self. *"Give to the poor,"* says our Lord; not, give to your relatives and friends. Shall a religious heed the first part of the divine counsel, and close his ears to the second part? This would be to act in a manner contrary to the perfection of his state, and to diminish the merit of his renunciation by spoiling it with the alloy of human affections.

There is, besides, a deeper reason for this disposition of his property which Christ proposes to the religious,—a reason which concerns the very security of his vocation. For if he should give his property to his kindred, might he not some day come to rely on them in the event of infidelity to his vocation? And would not the devil himself in the midst of the temptation, make use of this very reliance as a weapon to unbalance and vanquish him? On the other hand, if one has given one's possessions to the poor, one is entitled in the first place to that treasure which our Savior promises in return, since it is to Him really that one has given in the person of the poor; and, besides, when one has burned one's ships, as the saying is, nothing remains but to throw one's self without reserve, and as it were headlong, into the race for perfection. It is evident, then, that the practise of this evangelical counsel is not only more meritorious and more perfect, but that it is a safeguard against inconstancy and a help toward perseverance and fervor in the service of God.

If, however, the relatives themselves happen to be poor, it is evidently the duty of the religious to think of them before turning his attention to any one else;

[1] Matt. 19, *21.*

and, moreover, in estimating what their needs are, he must consider what is reasonably demanded by their condition in life.

In case any doubt on this subject should arise, one should, after having obtained permission, consult persons who are disinterested, well-informed, and virtuous. They must be well-informed, that they may be able to give good advice; they must be disinterested and virtuous, that they may give it according to God and true piety.

Other considerations too, of which a religious must take account, may present themselves in this matter; for instance, an obligation of justice, a duty of gratitude, perhaps even the need of avoiding whisperings, scandal, etc.

By the *poor* are also understood, beyond any doubt, the voluntary poor of Christ, and especially one's own brethren in religion. Nay, is it not even a duty of gratitude (to say the least) for a religious to be mindful of the needs of a community which is assuming his support for the rest of his life?

The words of the Gospel must also be held applicable to all *pious works*, such as the promotion of the sacred liturgy, the propagation of the faith, the Christian education of children, and any relief to those in distress; and it is just and natural to assist especially the works of the religious body to which one belongs.

Within these limits which are outlined by his profession, the religious is *free to follow his own devotion* in the distribution of his property; for it is to him and to no one else that Christ addresses those words, "Give to the poor"; and no one has a right to shackle the virtuous use which he wishes to make of his liberty in the disposal of the goods God has given him.

Superiors, however, have a duty of supervision and direction in this matter, to see that the religious does

nothing contrary to edification or to the spirit of his state.

V. As regards the practise of the virtue of poverty, and its various degrees of perfection, the *Catechism of the Vows* gives all the principles that govern it. If fuller treatment is desired it will be found in Rodriguez.[1] Suffice it to add here two remarks.

First: all who enter religion must from their noviceship try earnestly to grasp the idea of religious poverty, to get its spirit, to appreciate its holy niceties, and to be vigilant over earlier habits which are too often contrary to it. After one has been admitted to the livery of Him who "being rich became poor for our sakes," [2] one may no longer keep the thoughts, nor the judgments, nor the language, nor the inclinations of people of the world in regard to worldly wealth. He who is genuinely poor with Christ loves to appear so in his person, in his conduct, and even in the slightest details.

Secondly: in the eyes of a good religious, holy poverty is not only the wall of religion but also a mother to be loved with tender affection. Consequently he is not content merely to resign himself to her presence, but he is proud to wear her tokens, and gladly seeks opportunities to bear some privations for her. "Let all," says Saint Ignatius to his sons, "love poverty as a mother, and, according to the measure of holy discretion, let them be pleased to experience at times some of its effects." [3]

[1] Part III, Third Treatise, Chaps. 6, 7, and 8.
[2] II Cor. 8, 9.
[3] Rule 24 of the Summary.

Chapter Two

Religious Chastity

If the merit of the first vow of religion is so great in the eyes of God, how great must be that of the second? If evangelical poverty makes of the religious a man who is no longer attached to this world, what shall we say of that even more heavenly virtue by which he imitates the life of the angels themselves?

The *Catechism of the Vows*[1] has a sufficient explanation of what concerns this beautiful portion of the religious holocaust.

We see no need therefore to add anything upon the second vow. A summary of all that it demands of a religious may be given in three words: custody of our thoughts, custody of our affections, and custody of our senses. For details, reference may be made to the works of Fathers Rodriguez and Saint-Jure.[2]

Regular discipline includes several matters which have a bearing on religious chastity; such as *clausura,* the parlor, visiting, and the writing and receiving of letters. But all that religious need to know on these matters will be found in the rules of their institute;[3]

[1] Part II, Chap. II.

[2] Rodriguez, Christian Perfection, Part III, Fourth Treatise; Saint-Jure. L'homme religieux, Bk. I, Chap. 6.

[3] On these points the prescriptions of the Code are above all to be observed. It requires: the wearing of the religious habit unless permission to the contrary be given for grave cause (canon 596); the establishment of an enclosure even in congregations (canon 604); living as little as possible outside of religious houses (canon 605); religious women not to be allowed to go out alone without necessity (canon 607). Canon 611, in making mention of letters which are exempt from the control of superiors, supposes letters in general to be subject to their control.

as to superiors, they will do well to consult the treatise of Father Gautrelet, *L'Etat religieux,* for such explanations as they may desire.[1]

[1] We cannot well close this chapter without saying a word upon a problem of infinite delicacy, the education of the young to chastity and their enlightenment regarding the facts of generation. A person enters religion in blessed ignorance. (The instance will now occur less frequently than it used to, but it will still occur, especially in the case of girls.) Is such a person to be instructed? There is of course no universal answer, as circumstances differ radically. Possibly in contemplative orders silence may sometimes be best. In institutes devoted to teaching it would seem highly desirable that no teacher, whether male or female, should remain ignorant of the essential facts. A slightly more complete instruction seems appropriate for religious who will be assigned to the care of the sick. This instruction must give them an exact understanding of what is right and wrong in such matters, but should by no means dispense them from the rules of prudence. On the contrary, such religious are bound to exercise the greater vigilance over their senses and their affections because the very nature of their occupations presents real dangers for them. They will overcome these dangers by prayer, purity of intention in performing the duties of their state, a simplicity which is free from vain anxieties; but they must at the same time have a care to avoid all imprudence, and all liberties which their duties do not require.

If instruction in these matters be deemed advisable, it should ordinarily be given by word of mouth, and privately, either by the confessor (who should not, however, enter into details, at least in dealing with women), or by the superior, or by some religious of mature years and sound judgment.

The possession of the necessary knowledge in these matters is a means of banishing or diminishing many scruples, many troubles of conscience which may be more or less reasonable, and many narrowing worries. It will enable a person to recognize real sins and to dismiss from his mind imaginary ones. On the other hand, uncalled-for revelations in this matter sometimes stir up the mud deposited in our nature by original sin, and may disquiet certain souls who are more pure, or more impressionable, or more tempted than the common run. Hence it is the part of a wise director to gage each particular case; to decide whether such or such a soul should be instructed, and if so in what manner—plainly or by degrees—and to what extent.

Chapter Three

Religious Obedience

ARTICLE I

SOME PRINCIPLES REGARDING OBEDIENCE IN GENERAL[1]

I. The essential thing in obedience is to do what is commanded, not because it is pleasing nor because one wishes to do it for its own sake, but precisely because it is commanded and desired by the superior. Without this the act is not one of obedience.

Hence in things which are agreeable to us obedience is usually less, or may even entirely disappear; it is greater in things that are hard and contrary to our liking. Nevertheless, in the eyes of God, who reads and knows the secrets of hearts, it may happen that even in the first instance obedience is neither less genuine nor less meritorious, if only the will determine itself to obey with as great a measure of devotion to God.[2]

II. To do something contrary to the command without any intention of disobeying, is only material disobedience. If there be any fault, it belongs formally to another species of sin, according to the motive and

[1] 2^a 2^{ae}, q. 104, a. 2.

[2] Of course when one performs a penance or gives an alms through obedience, or does any other action which is in itself virtuous, nothing prevents one's having at the same time the merit of obedience and that of penance, mercy, or whatever the other virtue may be that is involved; and one may besides have still other merits corresponding to the various supernatural intentions which may inspire the same act.

object of the act, or according to the intention of the person who does it.[1]

III. A subject is bound to obey his superior in that matter only with regard to which he is subject to him, and in things wherein the superior does not contradict the order of any higher authority.[2] If the command were unjust it would be in no way binding, since God does not impart His authority to men for injustice. Still, a subject may perform an unjust command when its injustice falls only on himself and he consents to

[1] This doctrine of Saint Thomas, Suarez, and many others, contains nothing strange if it is rightly understood. The *general* virtue of obedience is as it were included in the other virtues and not really distinct from them as regards merit and demerit. To refrain from killing is to obey God, but it does not win the special merit of obedience to God; to kill is to disobey God, but it is not formally a sign of disobedience unless disobedience was formally intended. To do a pious work at the bidding of the superior is to obey him; but in doing so one will gain the peculiar merit of obedience (or, in other words, he will practise the *special* virtue of obedience) only if he do the work with the intention of conforming to the superior's will. On the other hand, not to perform the prescribed work is to disobey, but it is not a sin against the special virtue of obedience unless one intended to act against that virtue.

A doctrine which can claim such advocates as these, and which besides presents so plausible an explanation, may be held as at least very probable.

Nor need we fear the results of its practical application. In the first place good religious do not content themselves with avoiding sin, but strive to practise perfection positively, that is, to choose what is better. They will therefore prefer obedience to disobedience even though the latter be only material. Secondly, as is explained in the Catechism of the Vows at no. 132, it is seldom that material disobedience is without sin, either through the violation of some other obligation, or through scandal, the resulting disturbance to discipline, a bad intention, or some other cause.

[2] Evidently, if the superior were to command something that is manifestly sinful, it would be not only the subject's right, but his duty to disobey. This is the doctrine taught by unanimous authority; but its applications, happily, are very rare. It is a sufficient answer to the inane caricatures with which the ungodly sometimes attack religious obedience.

bear it. This may even become his duty for some special reason, for example to avoid scandal. In case of doubt as to whether the command be just or not, it is the subject's duty to obey, because the right to command, which certainly resides in the superior, has the right of way over a doubtful opinion. Hence, the legal maxim, "the presumption is in favor of the superior."

IV. Obedience to man for God's sake may easily be more meritorious than obedience to God Himself would be, were He to make known His will immediately. The reason is that one thus practises more fully and in a more difficult way a number of virtues, such as faith, humility, devotion, fortitude, etc. This is precisely one of the advantages which God has been pleased to attach to religious obedience.

V. Religious obedience consists in this, that man for the sake of pleasing the Lord, voluntarily puts himself in a state of subjection to another in whatever he may command that is not contrary to the rule. Yet, as has been explained in the *Catechism of the Vows,* in certain religious societies this obedience does not *of itself* oblige under pain of sin unless the superior declares that he issues the command in virtue of the vow. In other societies the constitutions provide that simple orders of superiors shall be binding under pain of venial sin.[1]

[1] In order to reconcile such a provision with the doctrine of Saint Thomas on the particular virtue of obedience, we must regard the venial sin here spoken of as a sin against the vow. Thus, in the religious societies here referred to, one may sin against the vow: first, grievously (if the matter is of that nature), when superiors formally appeal to the force of the vow; and secondly, venially, in the instance of a simple order not accompanied by any appeal to the vow. This theory is admitted by many authorities. In this matter of religious obedience wherein more than one point is obscure and disputed, we have tried (even at the cost of making a slight modification to the statement of Father Cotel) to present an explanation which shall be solid, clear, and consistent.

VI. The *blind* obedience which the saints recommend to religious as the most perfect and meritorious consists, says Suarez[1] in excluding the prudence of the flesh only, and not that prudence which is genuine and supernatural. Obedience requires the direction of prudence just as much as does every other moral virtue. But what is peculiar to it is that the judgment of prudence which guides it is based rather on an extrinsic principle, that is, on the judgment of the superior, than on itself, in matters which are not evident. It is called blind because, having this guide upon which to act, it puts its own judgment in the background. It excludes it in as far as it is vicious or imperfect, but not so as to banish all use of reason. For example, if what was commanded should seem to be contrary to the rule or to the commandments of God, it would examine the command in the light of reason, and decide.

ARTICLE II

OBEDIENCE COMPARED TO OTHER VIRTUES[2]

I. Obedience is inferior in dignity to the three theological virtues, since it is itself only a moral virtue. But it has the privilege of containing an excellent practise of the theological virtues.

II. Obedience, says Saint Thomas, holds the first place among the moral virtues. Surely of all the virtues the greatest is that which makes us despise the greatest of created goods in order to attach ourselves to God. Now, there are in the world three sorts of good things which man may sacrifice to the love of God. The lowest are exterior possessions; next are the things which pertain to the welfare of the body; and above all the others are the gifts of the soul,

[1] De Religione.
[2] 2^a 2^{ae}, q. 104, a. 3.

especially the will, by which man makes use of all other things. Obedience, which causes us to sacrifice our own will to God, is therefore in itself the greatest and most meritorious of all the moral virtues.

The same holy doctor also says that as obedience has its root in the reverence and submission which we owe to God, it belongs in this respect to the virtue of religion, and to its primary act which is devotion. Hence religion is the noblest part of justice, which ranks as the first of the moral virtues.

Finally the preeminence of obedience appears in this, that in order to obey, a man must omit any other act of virtue which is not obligatory; he must leave undone any optional good work in order to cling to obedience which is obligatory. Nor need he fear to suffer any spiritual loss in doing so, for obedience brings him a greater good to compensate him for the loss of the good act which he would have performed but which he gave up through obedience.

III. An inspired authority declares that "obedience is better than sacrifices";[1] and Pope Saint Gregory gives us the reason of it, "for by victims the flesh of another, but by obedience our own will is killed."[2] This is true of the sacrifice of obedience no matter with what other sacrifice you compare it, whether with that of giving alms, of mortification, or even of martyrdom; for all these things would be worthless without the accomplishment in them of the divine will.

IV. We may conclude this eulogy of obedience with a famous saying of Saint Gregory. "Obedience," says he, "is the only virtue that plants all other virtues in the mind; just as a gardener ingrafts one tree upon another, and after having so ingrafted them keeps them protected from all harm, so that they may grow and

[1] I Kings 15, *22*.

[2] "Per victimas aliena caro, per obedientiam vero voluntas propria mactatur." Moral. 35, 10.

bring forth their fruits in plenty."[1] In fact, as Saint Thomas points out, the acts of the other virtues belong to obedience, whether God commands by Himself or expresses His will through a superior who represents Him. Consequently when these acts produce and increase in us the holy habits of the virtues, we say with good reason that all this is the fruit of obedience. So too its proper function is to keep all the other virtues in that happy medium outside of which they would perish because they would turn to vice through insufficiency or excess. Of the religious especially is it true that daily obedience secures this advantage for him far more surely than if he had nothing to guide him except his own prudence.

ARTICLE III

THE VOW OF OBEDIENCE

I. The vow of obedience, says Saint Thomas[2] is the chief of the vows of religion, for three reasons.

First, because it offers to God man's very will, which is a greater offering than that of exterior goods by the vow of poverty or of those of the body by that of chastity. Hence all that one does through obedience is more pleasing to God than the works which proceed from one's own will. Even fasting fails to please Him when one's own will is its sole principle, according to those words of the Prophet, "Behold, in the day of your fast your own will is found."[3]

The second reason is that the vow of obedience includes the two others, while it is not itself included in them. Continence and poverty, which are already

[1] "Obedientia sola virtus est quae virtutes caeteras menti inserit, insertasque custodit." Moral. 35, 10.
[2] 2^a 2^{ae}, q. 186, a. 8.
[3] Is. 58, *3*.

obligatory by vow, are also obligatory by virtue of obedience, for these two virtues along with many others fall within its province. Hence in the order of Saint Benedict they do nothing more than explicitly vow obedience according to the rule.

The third reason is that the vow of obedience applies properly to the acts which are most intimately connected with the purpose of the religious life. Now, the more closely a thing is connected with the end or purpose, the more excellent it is.

It is for this reason that the vow of obedience is more indispensable to the religious state than the two others. The observance of poverty and chastity, even by vow, does not yet place one in that state which, as Saint Augustine says, is preferable even to virginity consecrated by vow. In that passage of the Gospel where our Lord invites us to perfection, the counsel of obedience is contained in those last words, "and come, follow Me," [1] for he who obeys follows the will of another. Hence the vow of obedience belongs to perfection even more than do the other two vows, as Saint Jerome states in explaining those words of Saint Peter, "Behold, we have left all things and have followed Thee." [2] It is, says the holy doctor, because it is not enough to abandon worldly goods, that the Apostle adds what is more perfect and says that he has followed our Lord Jesus Christ.[3]

II. In the *Catechism of the Vows* [4] particular care has been taken to explain everything that pertains to religious obedience, whether it relate to the obligation of the vow or to the perfect practise of the virtue. As for the practical developments which religious have

[1] Matt. 19, *21.*
[2] Matt. 19, *27.*
[3] "Quia non sufficit tantum relinquere, jungit quod perfectum est: Et secuti sumus te."
[4] Part II, Chap. III.

need of in a matter of such importance, the books which they have are full of them. Rodriguez in particular expounds at length all the points which the *Catechism* barely mentions.[1]

ARTICLE IV

MANIFESTATION OF CONSCIENCE AND SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

The same author, after treating of obedience, deals with the *manifestation of conscience,* a subject upon which there are some important explanations to be made.

I. Rodriguez and many other ascetical writers dwell upon the importance for a religious of laying his conscience entirely open to his superiors: sins, temptations, habits good or bad, penances, devotions, virtues, manner of prayer, etc.

Superiors are strictly bound to secrecy in all confidences which may be made to them; and they are not even permitted, without the consent of the religious in question, to communicate these secrets to other superiors, whether above or beneath their own station. They may, unless bound by the sacramental seal, make use of the knowledge themselves for the good of the subject and for his personal management, and even for the good of the community, but only upon the express condition that they do nothing of such a nature as to disclose to others the secret confided to them.

Moreover, as the religious on these occasions reveals himself to the superior as to a *father* and not as to a *judge,* the latter has no right to make this self-revelation the basis for rigorous measures against the subject. He may, however, reprove him gently, and may

[1] Part III, Fifth and Sixth Treatises.

even apply for his correction some helpful and paternal penance. In a word, the spirit which must animate the subject and the superior in these intimate relations is the spirit of love and charity alone. The one reveals his heart's secrets in order to obtain aid, light, and consolation; the other receives him with a very special affection and kindness in order to give him strength, to set him on his feet, to encourage and guide him, but not to reprimand him harshly nor to punish him; and he is far from thinking any the less of one who makes this manifestation as an act of virtue.

II. Unfortunately the manifestation of conscience to superiors gave rise to certain abuses, especially in cases where the superiors were not priests. Hence the apostolic decree of December 17, 1890, ordered expunged from the constitutions of all religious orders which had not priests as superiors, all that concerns the manifestation of conscience, and it also forbade such superiors to require the manifestation. At the same time it left to the subjects full liberty to unfold their consciences to their superiors in order to obtain "counsel and direction for the acquirement of virtue and for progress in perfection."

The substance of this decree is incorporated in canon 530 of the Code, but is there extended to all religious societies and to all superiors even though they be priests.

"1. All religious superiors are strictly forbidden to induce in any manner their subjects to make manifestations of conscience to them.

"2. Subjects, however, are not forbidden to manifest their consciences to superiors freely and of their own accord; in fact, it is to their interest to address themselves with filial confidence to their superiors and, when the latter are priests, to lay open to them also their doubts and troubles of conscience."

The following conclusions may be drawn from this canon:

First: no religious is obliged to lay open his conscience to his superiors. We must, however, except from this rule certain disclosures which under certain special circumstances might be demanded by the natural law, for example where the telling of them to the superior would be necessary in order to remove either from one's self or from one's neighbor a proximate occasion of mortal sin, or to remove a grave scandal or other serious danger from the community.

Secondly: superiors may not in any way induce their subjects to make manifestations of conscience. They may, however, question them concerning all exterior matters, (their health, the discharge of their particular duties, the material observance of the constitutions and regulations); and to such questions subjects are obliged to give sincere answers.

According to some excellent commentators, masters of novices not being superiors in the canonical sense, may question their novices even regarding their interior life. They should, however, refrain from inquiring into their sins, since they are forbidden to hear their confessions (canon 891). In order to enter into the spirit of the Church's government, they should proceed with great delicacy, and avoid ferreting out secrets which are not freely confided to them. If they are not priests they are bound to a still greater degree of reserve.

Thirdly: it is good and profitable for subjects to lay open their consciences to superiors. Yet the Code suggests that the manifestation should usually be less complete when the superiors are not priests. In that case, as a general rule, it is to one's confessor only that one should reveal sins, certain temptations which require cautious treatment, and troubles of conscience.

This canon 530, although immediately occasioned by some abuses which had to be suppressed, is really inspired by two great present tendencies in the Church: first, the tendency to separate the external from the internal forum, exterior and public government from interior spiritual direction; and, secondly, the tendency to leave to individual souls a larger measure of liberty. This latter tendency is noticeable especially in regard to confession, a matter about which we do not now intend to speak.

III. Seeing that manifestation of conscience for the purpose of getting appropriate direction and security from illusions, is regarded by the masters of the spiritual life as extremely important, and even as indispensable to beginners, religious who are in earnest in the quest of perfection should make it a point to manifest their consciences to some experienced director. If they prefer not to make their manifestation to their superior, let them make it to their confessor—either the ordinary or an extraordinary one—so that they may obtain at least from time to time, not a simple absolution upon the confession of some little faults, but a genuine *direction* which is suited to their individual condition, a piloting which will keep them off the rocks and enable them to make headway in the path of sanctity.

ARTICLE V

CONCLUSION

THE PERFECT MODEL OF OBEDIENCE

We can think of no better way to conclude this chapter and this entire work, than to recall to the mind of the reader the divine Model of obedience.

1. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and our Lord, came

into the world through obedience and in order to obey. Let us give ear to what He says through the royal Prophet and the great Apostle. "In the head of the book it is written of Me: that I should do Thy will, O God."[1] The reference is to the promise of a Redeemer made to the first man, disobedient and rebellious; and the meaning is: Ah, yes, O My Father and *My God,* I have subscribed to Your undertaking which is recorded in the first page of the Book; "I have desired *it,* and Thy law in the midst of my heart."[2] It is thus that our Savior by His obedience was to repair the mischief which disobedience had wrought on this earth. And during His entire mortal life, see how absolute and exact was the obedience of Jesus Christ to His Father! He Himself declared that He would not leave "one jot or one tittle of the law . . . till all be fulfilled."[3]

2. Not only did the Son of God wish by His Incarnation to assume a nature which made Him dependent and which enabled Him to subject His human will to the divine will, but for thirty years of His life He practised for our sakes the same sort of obedience which we must practise; He subjected Himself to human beings, His creatures, to Mary and Joseph, recognizing in them the authority of God His Father. "And He was subject to them";[4] this is the whole history of His hidden life; the Holy Ghost by the inspired author tells us nothing more of it.

3. Finally, for our sakes this divine Model "became obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross."[5] In His sacred Passion we see Him obeying even His enemies and His executioners with a humility and

[1] Ps. 39, *8* and *9;* Heb. 10, *7.*
[2] Ps. 39, *9.*
[3] Matt. 5, *18.*
[4] Luke 2, *51.*
[5] Philip. *2, 8.*

meekness that have no parallel; "He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and He shall not open His mouth." [1]

Here, then, is the living and perfect rule of religious obedience,—Jesus Christ, who says Himself to the aspirant after perfection, "Come, follow Me." Ah, must we not here repeat the words of Saint Paul, "Whoever shall follow this rule, peace on them"? [2] Yes, even in this life, and henceforth forever, world without end. Amen.

[1] Is. 53, *7*.
[2] Gal. 6, *16*.

INDEX

A

Absolute vow, 63
Active orders, 157, 158
Adoration, 34
Age for profession, 161
Alexis, Saint, poverty of, 68
Almsgiving and poverty, 136 sq.; and obedience, 215
Aloysius Gonzaga, Saint, sanctity of, 53
Alphonsus Liguori, Saint, on love of God, 101
Angel, guardian, 48 sq.
Annulment of vow, 58 sqq.; 160
Anselm, Saint, on religious profession, 70
Anthony, Saint, and discretion, 143; and transfer to another order, 164
Antoninus, Saint, on religious profession, 69
Apostasy, 77
Appetite, inferior and superior, 96 sq.
Approval of an institute, 86 sqq.; in early centuries, 87[1]; a guarantee of rectitude, 139
Associations, pious, 17
Athanasius, Saint, on religious profession, 70
Augustine, Saint, on chastity, 75; on love of God, 101, 104; on peace, 106; on love of neighbor, 113; on increase of charity, 117, 120; on religious, 126; on virtue, 128; on humility, 130; on poverty, 133; on the religious state, 138; rule of, 141; on God's gifts, 172

B

Baptism, and sanctity, 54; and religious profession, 69 sqq.; 73; of infants, 116[1]
Basil, Saint, rule of, 141
Belgium, orders of women in, 61, 89
Benedict, Saint, rule of, 141; and stability, 154
Benedict, Joseph Labrè, Saint, poverty of, 68
Benedictines, 151, 157; obedience among, 217
Bernard, Saint, and fervor, 41; on devotion, 47; on second baptism, 73; on martyrdom of poverty, 74; and the criminal, 77 sq.; on perfection, 144
Bishops, and dispensation from vows, 60, 61; can approve religious congregations, 87 sq.; and perfection, 146 sq.; and hierarchy, 148
Blessed Virgin, merits of, 83
Brotherhood, religious, duties of, 177 sqq.

C

Candidate, duties of superiors toward, 18; decision of, 19, 21
Canonization of saints, 132
Capuchins and poverty, 201
Carmelites, 89, 157; Discalced, 202

Carthusians, 151, 157
Cenobitical life, 153
Cessation of a vow, 55 sqq.
Charity, cause of devotion, 43; and worship, 51; the measure of perfection, 92 sq.; perfection of, 97 sqq.; growth of, 114 sqq.; decrease and loss of, 122 sqq.; and the other virtues, 127 sqq.; fraternal, 177 sqq.
Charity, Sister of, 158
Chastity, perpetual and absolute, 56, 61; virtue and vow, 66[3]; outside of religion, 68; and martyrdom, 75 sq.; and perfection, 134 sq.; summary of, 209 sq.; and education of the young, 210[1]
Chrysostom, Saint, on selfishness, 178
Church, the, and religious orders, 90 sq.; and perfection, 145 sqq.; and religious state, 153 sqq.; and various vows, 160; and transferring to another order, 164 sq.; 166[1]; and the vow of poverty, 197 sq.; and manifestation of conscience, 219
Cicero on poverty, 203
Cistercians, 151
Clerics, 149[1]
Colombière, Ven. Fr. de la, vow of, 56[2]
Commandments, the, and charity, 100
Common rules, 142
Community life, 153
Commutation of vows, 61
Concupiscence, 71, 135; and poverty, 194
Conditional vow, 63
Confessors, and dispensation from vows, 60; of nuns and lay congregations, 90; and jurisdiction, 150
Confidences, danger of, 24
Congregations, religious, approval of, 87; suppression of, 88; diocesan, 87; pontifical, 88; and religious orders, 159
Conscience, manifestation of, 218 sqq.
Consecration, act of, 17
Consent, 18
Constitutions, of diocesan congregations, 88 sq.; or the rules of detail, 140; and the vows, 143 sqq.
Contemplation, cause of devotion, 43
Contemplative orders, 156; Saint Thomas on, 158
Contempt for rule, 140
Contract-promise, 16, 17, 22
Covetousness, 135
Criminals and the religious life, 84[1]
Crucifixion, the, and the religious life, 76 sq.
Cupidity and poverty, 189 sqq.; 196, 204

D

"Decretum Laudis," 88
Deliberate act, 17
Detachment in regard to relatives, 181 sqq.
Devotion, 36; substantial, 41 sqq.; accidental, 46 sqq.; and the religious life, 81
Dennis, Saint, on devotion, 49; on love of God, 95
Dilection, 95
Diocesan congregations, 87 sq.
Discretion, 143
Dismissal and the vows, 59 sq.; 160
Dispensation from vows, 60 sqq.
Divine office, singing of, 39[1]
Dominicans, 157
Dominion, right of, 58

E

Ecstasy, 48
Edification, 179
Esteem, 180
Evangelical counsels, 64 sqq.; outside of religion, 67 sqq.; and charity, 99
Exempt orders, 150[3]

F

Faith, 129 sq., 132
Faults against fraternal charity, 178
Fear, 21
Fervor of spirit, 46
First Principle, God as, 37 sq.
Fortitude, 132
France, orders of women in, 61, 89
Francis of Assisi, Saint, rule of, 141; and vision of Innocent III, 151
Friars Minor and poverty, 201
Francis of Sales, Saint, on devotion, 42, 47; on charity, 43; on the religious state, 153
Francis Xavier, Saint, and spiritual joy, 45
Fraud, 21
Friendship, 95; divine, 96, 107

G

God, obligation to, 22; promises of, 26; contract of, 26 sqq.
Gratian, Decretum of, and penance, 84
Gregory the Great, Saint, on law of charity, 123; on charity as foundation, 131; on a holocaust, 135; on rule, 139; on poverty, 194; on obedience, 215

H

Hierarchy and religious, 148
Holocaust, 40; Saint Gregory on, 135; Saint Thomas on, 136
Holy Orders, degrees of, 148[2]
Honor due to God, 39
Hope, 132
Humility, 129 sq., 132

I

Ignatius, Saint, on love of neighbor, 111; on charity, 116; rule of, 141; on vocation, 165; on the service of God, 168; on the spiritual exercises, 173; on love for relatives, 186; on poverty, 193, 195 sq.; and his scholastics, 202; on love of poverty, 208
Ignorance, 18
Impossibility of observing vows, 57 sq.
Inconstancy, 23 sqq.
Infallibility of Pope in approving order, 86[2]
Infants and charity, 116[1]
Institutes, religious, approval of, by Church, 86 sqq.; rule of, 139; perfection of, 144; and the religious state, 153 sq.; variety of, 155 sqq.
Isidore, Saint, on impurity, 75; on rule, 138

J

Jansenists and charity, 103[1]
Jerome, Saint, on martyrdom, 73; on almsgiving, 137; on clerics, 147
Jesus Christ, the Perfect Model of obedience, 221
John of the Cross, Saint, on devotion, 50

John the Baptist, Saint, sanctity of, 53
John Berchmans, Saint, and the rules, 142
Joy, caused by devotion, 44 sqq.; 46 sqq.; outcome of love, 106
Jurisdiction in the Church, 58, 150
Justice and religion, 31 sq., 132

L

Latria, 30, 34
Leo, Saint, on dignity of Christians, 41
Levitation, 48
Love of God, notions of, 94 sqq.; seat of, 96 sq.; perfection of, 97 sqq.; explanation of, 101 sqq.; totality of, 104 sq.; interior effects of, 105 sqq.; exterior effects of, 108 sq.
Love of neighbor, motive of, 110 sqq.; explanation of, 112 sq.; perfection of, 113 sq.

M

Manifestation of conscience, 218 sqq.
Manuscripts and the vow of poverty, 199
Martyrdom, and immolation, 31; and homage, 64; and religious profession, 73 sqq.; and obedience, 215
Mass, the, 31
Matter and obligation of vow, 56
Meditation, 25; cause of devotion, 43; and charity, 121
Mendicant orders, 151; and poverty, 201 sq.
Merit in the religious life, 84 sqq.; Saint Thomas and Council of Trent on, 118, 119[1]
Mind, the, 102; and love of God, 107
Mixed orders, 157, 158
Modesty, 132
Molinos, condemnation of, 49
Monastic orders, 156; and poverty, 202
Moniales, 89; and profession, 160
Moral virtues, 40
Mortal sin, matter for vow binding under, 56; and charity, 124
Mortification, 74, 132; and obedience, 215

N

Novice-ship, 20; and profession of men, 160; requirements for validity, 161 sq.

O

Obedience, virtue of, sphere of, 66; compared to other virtues, 214 sq.; the Perfect Model of, 221
Obedience, vow of, sphere of, 66[2]; outside of religion, 67 sq.; and martyrdom, 76; and perfection, 134; objections against, 136; general principles of, 211 sqq.; blind, 214; chief vow of religion, 216 sqq.
Obligations of a vow, 55 sqq.; of religious profession, 176 sqq.
"Old man," the, and profession, 70 sqq.
Optimism, 26
Oratory, the, 17
Orders, religious, rights over members, 61; approval of, 86 sqq.; and designation of rule, 140; work of, in Church, 151; and congregations, 159
Origen on amendment, 126

P

Parents and vows of children, 58
Patience, 132
Peace and the love of God, 106
Peculia, 205
Perfection, state of, and the vows, 63 sqq.; 78 sqq.; notions of, 91 sqq.; principal means of, 133 sqq.; secondary means, 138 sqq.; and institutes, 144
Perpetual vows, and the rule, 55 sq.; definition of, 63 sq.; and perfection, 135; the Church and, 160; merit of, 160 sq.
Perseverance, 23 sqq.
Personal vow, 63
Piety and charity, 111
Pious works, 207
Pontifical congregations, 88 sq.
Poor Clares, 89, 157
Pope, the, and dispensation from vow of chastity, 56, 61; authorization of, necessary for transfer, 62; approval of, necessary for institute, 86 sqq; infallibility of, in approving order, 86[2]; reserves power to suppress orders, 88; and the rule, 140; and the hierarchy, 148[2]
Poverty, virtue of, sphere of, 66; 203 sqq.
Poverty, vow of, sphere of, 66[2]; outside of religion, 67; and martyrdom, 74 sq.; and perfection, 133 sq.; 135; objection against, 136; and cupidity, 188 sqq.; the wall of religion, 191 sqq.; nature and matter of, 197 sq.; violations of, 198 sqq.; personal and common, 200 sqq.
Prayer, 36; and love of God, 95
Precepts and counsels, 65
Prelate, vow of a, 69
Presumption, 44
Priesthood and perfection, 147 sq.; order of precedence in, 150
Probation, 19
Profession, religious, and baptism, 69 sqq.; and martyrdom, 73; and vows, 160; requirements for validity in general, 161 sq.; for perpetual vows, 162; obligations of, other than vows, 176 sqq.
Promises, kinds of, 16
Property, disposition of, 205 sqq.
Prudence, 131

R

Real vow, 63
Regulars, definition of, 159[2]
Relatives and detachment, 181 sqq.
Religio, 20[2]
Religion, virtue of, 31 sqq.; etymology of, 33; meaning of, 33 sq.; interior acts, 36; exterior acts, 36; and other virtues, 36 sqq.; a moral virtue, 40; and sanctity, 50 sqq.; vow of entering, 64; vows outside of, 66 sqq.
Religious, 32; and religion, 34; and his debt to God, 34 sq.; duty of, 40 sq.; and sanctity, 52; "second baptism" of, 69 sqq.; new life of, 71 sqq.; sins of, 125 sqq.; and personal perfection, 144; and community life, 153 sq.; definition of, 159[2]; and the virtues of religion, 171 sqq.; classes of, 173 sq.; and temporal goods, 205 sq.; duty of, toward poverty, 208
Religious state, 78 sqq.; merit of, 80 sqq.; 84 sqq.; means

of perfection in, 132 sqq.; Saint Thomas on, 135 sq.; in general, 153 sqq.
Reserved vows, 60
Resolution, 16
Reverence, 38
Romuald, Saint, and spiritual joy, 45
Rules, the, determine the vows, 55 sq., 143 sqq.; vow to observe, 56, 57[1]; means of perfection, 138 sqq.; of an institute, 139; and rule, 140; four principal, 141; common, 142

S

Sacraments and sanctity, 54
Sacrifice, vow and, 30 sq.
Sadness, spiritual, 45 sq.
Salvation, 52; and charity, 100
Sanctifying grace, 99[1], 112[3]
Sanctity, 50 sqq.; elements of, 52 sqq.; and the evangelical counsels, 64 sqq.; and charity, 131 sq.; and religious state, 153
Satan and devotion, 48; and poverty, 194
Secularization, perpetual, 61
Self-denial, 132
Selfishness, 178
Self-love and devotion, 48
Seneca on rule, 138
Sensible devotion, 47 sqq.
Sensuality, spiritual, 50
Service due to God, 39
Simple vows, of women, 61, 89; and religious orders, 159 sq.; merit of, 160[4]
Sloth, spiritual, 42
Society of Jesus, 157; vows of scholastics in, 159; and property, 202; a mendicant order, 202
Solemn vows, of women, 61, 89; and religious orders, 159 sq.; merit of, 160[4]
Spiritual reading, cause of devotion, 43
Stability and sanctity, 53; and the religious life, 154
State, a, 78 sq.; secular and religious, 79 sq.
Suarez on the counsels, 66; on vow of obedience, 68; on approval of an order, 87; and religious state, 153 sq.; on obedience, 212[1]; on blind obedience, 214
Suavity, 46 sqq., 49
Saint-Sulpice, Society of, 17
"Supererogatory" works, 35
Superiors and the candidate, 18, 20, 143; and dispensation from vows, 60; and validity of profession, 161 sq.; and obedience, 212 sqq.; and manifestation of conscience, 218 sqq.
Support of religious houses, 192[2]
Suppression of congregations, 88
Suspension of vows, 59

T

Tears, 48
Temperance, 132
Temporary vows and the rule, 55 sq.; the church and, 160; merit of, 160 sq.
Tepidity, 42, 119, 171 sq.
Teresa, Saint, and reverence for God, 38; and "vow of the more perfect," 57[1]; vow of, 69
Theological virtues, 39
Thomas, Saint, on the virtue of religion, 31, 33, 35 sqq.; on the practice of religion, 39; on religious, 40; on sensible devotion, 47 sq.; on sanctity, 51 sq.; on the counsels, 66; on religious profession, 69; on virtue, 82

sq.; on penance, 84; on perfection, 85, 91 sqq.; on love of God, 107, 109; on love of God and neighbor, 111 sq.; on merit, 118, 119[1]; on loss of charity, 122 sqq.; on sins of religious, 125; on virtue, 127 sq.; on humility and faith, 129 sq.; on the religious state, 135 sq.; on almsgiving, 137; on obedience, 137; on rule, 139 sq.; on religious institutes, 158; on transfer to another institute, 163; on filial duty, 182 sqq.; on poverty of orders, 202; on obedience, 212[1]; on the virtue of obedience, 214 sq.; on the vow of obedience, 216
Time for novice-ship, 162
Transfer to another order, 62; Saint Thomas on, 163
Trent, Council of, on God's help, 25[1]; on concupiscence, 71[2]; on newly baptized, 72; on merit, 118, 119[1]; on the hierarchy, 148[2]; on owning of property by mendicant orders, 201
Trial of the vows, 18

U

Union with God, 107, 121
United States, orders of women in, 61[1]

V

Validity of a vow, 55 sqq.
Venial sin, vow to avoid, 57; and charity, 122 sq.; and religious, 125 sq.
Violence, 21
Virtue, Saint Thomas on, 127 sqq.
Virtues of religion, 171 sqq.
Visitandines, 61, 89
Vocation, 161; esteem and love for, 167 sqq.; and filial duty, 184 sq.
Vow, definition, 15; a promise, 16 sq.; deliberate, 17 sqq.; a promise to God, 22 sqq.; a promise of a better act, 29; and a sacrifice, 30 sq.; of entering religion, 64
Vows, in general, 15; definition, 15; and sanctity, 54; private, 58; protected by Church, 58; excellence of, 63 sqq; outside of religion, 66 sqq.; before profession, 59; means of perfection, 133 sqq.; and the rule or constitutions, 143; classes of, 159 sqq.; and the virtues, 171 sqq.

W

Will, the, 96 sq., 102; and love of God, 107; and obedience, 135
Worry, 46
World, the, 71[1]; and poverty, 194
Worship, 33; the essence of religion, 51

Z

Zeal, produced by love of God, 109, 132

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